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A NEW HISTORICIST ANALYSIS OF EDUCATION AND FEMALE-LIFE FACTORS IN THE 1926 INDIANA PRAIRIE FARMER MAGAZINE COLUMN "JOHN TURNIPSEED"

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A NEW HISTORICIST ANALYSIS OF EDUCATION AND FEMALE-LIFE FACTORS IN THE 1926 *INDIANA PRAIRIE FARMER* MAGAZINE COLUMN "JOHN TURNIPSEED"

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ABSTRACT

Mills, Jessica E. M.S., Purdue University, December 2015. A New Historicist Analysis of Education and Female-Life Factors in the 1926 *Indiana Prairie Farmer* Magazine Column "John Turnipseed." Major Professor: Mark Tucker.

This research used a literary-theoretical approach to guide investigation of the once-popular column titled "John Turnipseed," which was published for more than 60 years in the *Indiana Prairie Farmer* magazine. As the fictional author, Turnipseed entertained thousands of rural readers through his humorous first-person narration of interactions and adventures on and about his Indiana farm in the early twentieth century. The research focused specifically on the 51 Turnipseed columns published in the year 1926, a pivotal era in U.S. agriculture as well as American society. The literary theory of New Historicism was used to analyze two historical factors — education and lives of females — and to generate claims about the culture of 1920s rural America. The theory of New Historicism, based in disciplines of English and literature, has a primary goal of providing insight into the culture of an era through the analysis of a text while recognizing the significance of the critic's era in the analysis. New Historicism asserts that all texts hold equal value for analysis and that the culture of the era is more influential than the author when analyzing a text. The current analysis generated threeclaims from the Turnipseed text: (1) In the 1920s, education was perceived as unnecessary compared to common sense; (2) too much education was perceived

negatively; and (3) females were portrayed as stock characters commonly represented as nagging wives. The claims are used to draw inferences about the 1920s American rural subculture while keeping in mind that modern-day culture profoundly influences today's critic. While relatively uncommon as an analytical approach in agricultural communication scholarship, literary theory can be used to demonstrate the importance of columns like John Turnipseed as sources of information about everyday life and culture in previous historical periods. Literary analyses can help readers rediscover text from bygone eras that may otherwise become a lost art in the twenty-first century. Because they offer an alternative to conventional social science methods, literary theoretical approaches such as New Historicism may also hold potential to diversify scholarship in agricultural communication and agricultural education.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 1920s America

The year is 1926, nearly ninety years ago from present day. Life was difficult for people living in rural areas. Many of the comforts and technologies introduced during the decade of the Roaring Twenties were slow to emerge in rural areas. Positioned between the major events of World War I and the Great Depression, agriculture was still a difficult physical activity. Most farmers had little or no access to modernization and innovations of that era. Also lacking was economic protection, such as farm programs and insurance, making agriculture an even more high-risk business.

Diffusion of technologies that would make life easier was one of the major features of the 1920s, but the process of diffusion was slow and uneven. For example, a revolutionary communication technology sweeping the United States in the 1920s was radio. However, few rural homes had electricity. Only about 11% of rural homes at this time had electrical services (Erb, 1991, p. 33). This provided a need for a way to transmit information and news to rural areas. For many farm families, this information void was filled with agricultural publications.

1.2 Agricultural Publications

Farm papers, which had been in existence in the United States since the 1790s (Marti, 1980, p. 29) were still one of the most reliable ways to provide news and information to rural areas. Although hundreds of agricultural publications were launched in the 1800s, many were in business for only a short period of time (Evans, 1969). A constant element of farm publications throughout the period and continuing to today is their objective of diffusing farm news and information to cultivate change and progress in the agricultural sector (Lemmer, 1957, p. 3; Burnett & Tucker, 2001). Publications reported on alternative farming methods and shared stories of successful famers. Through advertisements, publications also shared information about new products for the farm and home. For many rural families, publications were the primary method for receiving farm information.

Not only were agricultural publications a way to communicate information relevant to daily life and work, but they also served as a form of entertainment for readers. Farm publications included fictional stories and cartoons to entertain their readership, and they did so at a time when entertainment options for farm and rural audiences were limited (Boone, Meisenbach, & Tucker, 2000).

In the mid-19th century, only 30 states had been admitted to the Union. However, during this period, an important category of farm magazines — state farm magazines — would surface to serve the needs of individual states and become among the most popular regional publications of the period (Tucker & Whaley, 2000). One such agricultural publication that provided both news and entertainment was the Indiana Prairie Farmer. The magazine published primarily agricultural production information but it also carried

fictional content. A recurring column published within the Indiana Prairie Farmer focused on a fictional character named John Turnipseed. This self-titled series followed the humorous adventures of Turnipseed on his Indiana farm. While intended to be humorous, Turnipseed covered a variety of relevant and timely agricultural topics. The column would go on to be one of the longest-running and most popular columns in the Prairie Farmer and Indiana Prairie Farmer with its fairly consistent publication from the early 1920s until the beginning of the twenty-first century. (Evans, 1969, p. 70; T. Bechman, personal communication, September 17, 2015).

With the advent of radio as a mass medium in the early twentieth century, print media lost its monopoly as a provider of farm and home information to rural audiences. Still, print media have endured and remain one of the most important channels of agricultural information into the current era (Boone, Meisenbach, & Tucker, 2000). Many such publications, including Indiana Prairie Farmer, have withstood the test of time and are still being published. In addition to their current value as sources of specialized farm magazines for regional readership, they are also valuable artifacts for examining agriculture and farm life in bygone centuries. In particular, they document an often unseen view of agricultural history through their content, language, and tone. While farm publications are valuable in their own right as historical documents, these artifacts, and agriculture more generally, must be placed in the larger context of American life to gain a more complete picture of their role and importance.

1.3 Research Objectives

The current research examines content of the *Indiana Prairie Farmer* to draw conclusions about social conditions in 1920s rural America. Of particular interest in the analysis are the historical factors of education and the lives of females. These selections reflect important social factors that were emerging and changing during the 1920s. Specifically, this research will examine content of the John Turnipseed columns to analyze and draw conclusions about these two factors.

The literary theory of New Historicism is used to guide the analysis. The research has the following objectives:

1. To describe the John Turnipseed content in the *Indiana Prairie Farmer* in terms of content, major themes, and style.
2. To use New Historicism as a literary criticism tool to analyze the John Turnipseed content in the context of its culture.
3. To understand how the historical factors of education and the lives of females are reflected in the content of the John Turnipseed column.

The study adds a new dimension to the agricultural communication literature in its analysis of fictional content published in a farm magazine. While the Turnipseed columns are not "news" content, it is possible to gain insights from this material because it reflects the views and ideas of the era's culture. The current analysis will focus on the column's coverage of education and lives of females as important social themes during the period.

Generations living in 2015 can likely not fully understand social and living conditions in 1926. Analyzing media content produced in that time period offers one way to gain a deeper understanding of the era. In their attempts to understand the past, some

readers may apply concepts and values from their own era. The application of the New Historicist literary theory provides a mechanism to avoid the interpretation of historical events being overly influenced by current culture and values.

1.4 Limitations

The limitations of this study focus on the narrow scope of many of its factors. The study analyzes only one publication as well as one year. There are hundreds of farm magazines that could have been selected for this study, and multiple years could also have been analyzed. Additionally, only the two historical factors of education and the lives of females were selected from a plethora of important factors that could have been studied. While trying to capture an era like the 1920s, it is difficult to obtain a complete picture of the time period. With so many facets of society and culture to understand, there are going to be aspects that are missed in the description of the time period. These limitations are necessary, however, in order to make the research and study manageable.

1.5 Role of the Researcher

With this study, the role of the researcher must be considered as it has a potential impact on the analysis and findings. I am a 23-year-old female from central Pennsylvania who is attending a university in the Midwest. I became interested in this topic because my undergraduate degree is in English Secondary Education. I grew up in a rural community and have an agricultural background which led to an interest in analyzing fictional content published in farm magazines.

Due to my background in education, I selected education as one of the historical factors to be analyzed. In my undergraduate and graduate experiences, I have taken numerous classes in the field of education, and I student-taught English at the middle-school level for a semester. Education is also a key component to my current graduate studies and is an important pillar in the academic department at the university where the research was conducted. I have also had experiences working with 4-H youth summer programs. All of these educational experiences have influenced my understanding of the world. Specifically, when reading texts, I perceive them in an educational manner, and I think about how they could be applied in a classroom setting. Through my work as an English major, I believe that texts, regardless of whether they are fictional or nonfictional, can provide insight into the world in which we live. Text has the power to transcend time, and to connect the present day to people, places, and ideas from the past.

Additionally, I selected the historical factor of the lives of females because as a female, I also felt an important connection to this area of research. I went into the analysis recognizing through my previous studies of history that females in the past have rarely been treated as equals to their male counterparts. While today women still struggle to gain equal rights as men in some area, I have never felt discriminated against due to my gender.

As the author of the current research, I recognize my views of the world help shape my role as critic. In the following sections of this document, I use first-person pronouns to acknowledge my role in the analysis. Based on my review of literature, I am aware that New Historicist analyses may include a critical theoretical perspective. While

I attempted to use *critical thought* throughout this analysis, I did not employ a critical theoretical approach.

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of Chapter 2 is to provide the background and literature review needed for this study. A solid background, provided by research on previous studies and historical information, establishes a strong foundation for the analysis. The literature search was conducted by reviewing articles, studies, video documentaries, and primary sources from the 1920s era. The chapter starts with an overview of 1920s America to provide a thorough understanding of the time period. This overview will later help establish the analysis. Following the depiction of the 1920s era is the literature review providing information on the history of American agricultural magazines. The focus then narrows from the overall background of American agricultural magazines to the history of the *Indiana Prairie Farmer* and the John Turnipseed columns. Finally, Chapter 2 describes New Historicism, the literary theory used in the analysis.

2.2 1920s America

The 1920s were the first decade following World War I. While the country enjoyed relative prosperity following the end of the war (1918), prosperity in agriculture ended by the mid-1920s. To meet the growing wartime demand for food, many farmers had borrowed money to purchase land. The end of the war brought an end to the high demand for food (Documentary Tube, 2014). Grain prices dropped and remained low for the decade. Farmers struggled with lower incomes and a higher cost of living (Erb, 1991, pp. 32-33). Many farmers were left with mortgages for land they no longer needed and could not afford with the lower demand for food, and foreclosures were common. Prior to the stock market crash of 1929, one of every four farms was sold to pay taxes in the United States (Documentary Tube, 2014).

Farmers saw significant introductions of mechanical technology in the 1920s with the combine becoming popular in the Midwest for the harvesting of soybeans. In addition, smaller, lighter tractors became available during this period and were popular among farmers. With their purchase, farmers could reduce the number of farm laborers needed on their farms. While agricultural technology became more widespread, labor-saving technology within households was not improving as quickly. Statistics from the 1920s show only 1% of rural houses had running water, 95% still had outhouses, and only 11% had battery or city electrical service. Inventions that were slowly coming to rural households included oil ranges and motorized washers, wringers, and butter churns. Household chores were also made easier for those who could afford such new inventions as the vacuum cleaner and electric refrigerator. However, Schweider (1983) points out that new, labor-saving home appliances, unlike agricultural innovations, were not

profitable and did not offer economic benefits to their users. Accordingly, they were not a priority in many farm households.

Although 1929 would bring the stock market crash that led to the Great Depression, farmers did not feel the economic consequences as severely as the rest of the country because they had already been undergoing economic hardship following World War I. Some economists during the period believed the stock market crash would lead to even better times for rural Americans because the money previously tied up in stocks would now be available to use (Erb, 1991, pp. 32-33).

Just as agriculture was undergoing extensive change, so was the rest of the United States. In fact, the cities demonstrated change at a much faster and more frequent rate (McDonnell, 2013). While agriculture seemed to be struggling, the urban economy was flourishing. Between the years of 1920 and 1929, the nation's total wealth more than doubled, and for the first time in U.S. history, more people lived in the city than in rural areas. Farmers were suddenly the minority and were responsible for providing food for the growing urban public (History.com staff, 2010). In addition, during the 1920s, American society was developing a consumer mentality created by chain stores and advertising. For the first time in history, people on opposite ends of the country could buy the same products because of the new "mass culture" created by chain stores and their ability to supply mass-manufactured items (History.com staff, 2010). As a result, the United States held 40% of the world's wealth (Documentary Tube, 2014).

Products such as the radio and automobile would change the face of America forever in the 1920s. The first commercial radio station, Pittsburgh KDKA, went on the air in 1920, and by 1923 more than 500 stations were broadcasting throughout the nation.

By the end of the decade, more than 12 million households had radios (History.com staff, 2010). In 1921, KDKA became the first radio station to serve farmers when it broadcasted fruit and vegetable prices (Baker, 1981). The public was also beginning to go to movie-houses. By the end of the 1920s, at least three-fourths of the American population were attending movies weekly (History.com staff, 2010). Additionally, music was changing as the 1920s ushered in the new sounds of the Harlem Renaissance and Jazz Age with performers such as Louis Armstrong, Bessie Smith, and Duke Ellington. George Gershwin, a composer and pianist, was also an influential music figure of the day (McDonnell, 2013).

During this time, literature was defined by the change of the 1920s. Authors such as T.S. Eliot, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Sinclair Lewis, and William Faulkner wrote books that discussed the change of the decade and depicted what life was like in that era. Popular children's stories during this era were "The Little Red Hen" and "Little Black Sambo" ("1920s Literature," 2012). *The New York World* was the most well-known paper of the 1920s (Musser, 2007).

Automobiles were a revolutionary commodity purchased heavily by 1920s consumers. Low prices, such as $260 for a Ford Model T in 1924, as well as generous credit, made it easy to purchase an automobile in the 1920s (History.com staff, 2010). Families who could not afford other luxuries still made it a priority to purchase an automobile. The automobile was particularly influential in changing the lives of young people who had more freedom to travel, roam, and engage in other activities. Lessons learned in manufacturing the low-cost Model T would soon be applied to other industries

as the assembly line would revolutionize manufacturing and boost the Industrial Revolution.

In addition to the automobile, the U.S. took to the air in a major fashion in 1927, when Charles Lindbergh completed the first nonstop flight over the Atlantic Ocean. This accomplishment showed the world that air travel for business and recreation was possible (Documentary Tube, 2014).

Women experienced unprecedented freedom in the 1920s. The 19th Amendment to the Constitution granted all women in the United States full voting rights in 1920 (Klein, 2015). Despite the importance of this legislation, it is noteworthy that the female vote was for many years limited largely to the wealthy. A second lesser-reported feature of the 19th Amendment are reports of police brutality toward women who protested for the right to vote leading up to 1920. Once such incident, known as the "Night of Terror," occurred in Laurel Hill, Virginia, in 1917 when 33 female protestors were beaten by the Occoquan workhouse guards and superintendent for picketing at the White House for women's suffrage (Lavender & Lavender, 2003).

More women were also entering the workforce in such positions as secretaries and stenographers. Additionally, the 1920s were the age of the iconic flapper, and while many women did not embody the full image of the flapper, clothing did change for most women. The 1920s also provided women with more birth-control options which allowed females to have some control over the size of their family (History.com staff, 2010). The female mentality began to change in the 1920s as women began to live for themselves rather than just for their families (McDonnell, 2013). In addition, adolescents and young

adults were experiencing a much more fast-paced world than their parents with the new inventions and ideals sweeping America (Documentary Tube, 2014).

The increased freedom and improved standard of living enjoyed by some women in the 1920s generally did not extend to rural women. Rural women's work was never-ending as they washed and sewed clothes for the family, cooked, grew and canned vegetables, and typically lived in isolation except for occasional interaction with neighbors or at church (Bryan, 2012). Schweider (1983) writes that 1920s Iowa farm women often worked "exceedingly long hours performing many of their household tasks in the same manner as their mothers, and sometimes even their grandmothers, before them" (p. 108). If the farm husband took a job to help make ends meet, the already-burdened farm wife had to absorb additional farm and home responsibilities (Eagan, 1990).

The 1920s were a time of prosperity for some Americans. Industry thrived and new inventions made life easier for those who could afford them (Documentary Tube, 2014). Advertising became much more pervasive, providing Americans with opportunities to see what their money, or credit, could purchase (McDonnell, 2013). During this period, advertising began to occupy more than half of the space in daily newspapers (Campbell, Martin, & Fabos, 2012).

For the first time in U.S. history, women had more luxury time and men were making more money for their wives to spend. Credit was becoming a major factor in the lives of Americans as more people began to purchase items using installment plans or lines of credit that were easy for them to acquire (Documentary Tube, 2014). By 1927, 75% of household goods were being purchased using credit (McDonnell, 2013). These

spending habits, as well as inflated stock prices on Wall Street, would contribute to the stock market crash of October 1929 that would usher in the Great Depression (Documentary Tube, 2014).

With the rise of purchasing power also came government limitations to some freedoms during the 1920s. The 18th Amendment to the Constitution prohibited the sale of liquor in 1919, and on January 16, 1920, the Volstead Act closed every bar in the United States. Prohibition led to the black market sale of alcohol (History.com staff, 2010). Within the cities, few people paid attention to these laws, and those willing to risk selling alcohol were able to make money from the venture. Local police officers often did not enforce Prohibition and sometimes were themselves found in speakeasies (McDonnell, 2013). Bootleggers were illegally selling liquor in speakeasies across the country. Prohibition was endorsed by many white, middle-class Americans who equated drinking with the immigrants of the cities. Unfortunately, the movement actually led to more organized crime. Bootleggers, such as Al Capone in Chicago, not only sold alcohol but also reportedly paid off half of the Chicago police force (History.com staff, 2010). Gangsters such as Capone generated more violence in the cities as rival bootlegger gangs vied for territories to sell their alcohol (McDonnell, 2013).

Prohibition was a tension between the growing urban lifestyle and the values that many middle-class Americans were unwilling to relinquish. Aside from alcohol, there was growing social conflict as African-Americans moved from the rural South to other areas of the country. In opposition to this migration, millions of Americans joined the Ku Klux Klan (History.com staff, 2010). Membership rose to 4 million in the 1920s. The KKK was responsible for violence throughout the country and for more than 200 deaths.

Race riots erupted in cities across the United States, including the nation's capital where more than 50,000 members marched (McDonnell, 2013). The KKK targeted African-Americans, Jews, and Catholics because any concept that was foreign to its beliefs was considered dangerous (Documentary Tube, 2014).

Anti-Communist and anti-immigrant sentiments were strong during the 1920s as Americans feared that they would not be able to preserve democracy from extremist Communist parties. These beliefs led to hysteria in some areas of the country and to the need for loyalty oaths from city teachers (Documentary Tube, 2014). These sentiments led in 1924 to the passing of the National Origins Act, which limited the number of immigrants who could enter the country from Eastern Europe and Asia in favor of those from Great Britain and Northern Europe (History.com staff, 2010).

Education became headline news in 1925 when old and new ideals clashed in rural Dayton, Tennessee. Many states, such as Tennessee, had enacted laws against teaching evolution in schools. A Tennessee school teacher, John T. Scopes, went against the law and taught his biology class about evolution (McDonnell, 2013). The ensuing legal battle became known in the newspapers as the "Scopes monkey trial" (Documentary Tube, 2014). People from all over the world traveled to Tennessee for the trial, which began to resemble a carnival more than a court case. Ultimately, Scopes was found guilty and fined $100 (McDonnell, 2013). The case called attention to the major split between religion and science but did nothing to resolve the matter. It would be another 40 years before some states were allowed to teach evolution (Documentary Tube, 2014).

Education in the 1920s was immensely different from today. In the 1920s, most U.S. citizens had only around an eighth-grade education, and the U.S. Census Bureau

would not begin collecting educational attainment data until the 1940s (Ryan & Siebens, 2012). Numbers from Purdue University show there were 82 graduates receiving a bachelor of science in agriculture in 1926 (S. Lipps, personal communication, July 6, 2015).

The Appendix, located at the end of the document, provides visual evidence of the 1920s rural lifestyle in Indiana. These photographs are meant to help enhance the understanding of life in the 1920s related to the themes central to this document. The photographs show elements of agriculture and the tools available as well as images relating to education, females, and the communication of that era.

Ultimately, the 1920s were a turning-point and time of rapid change for the United States. The many names that surround this decade such as the Jazz Age, the Roaring Twenties, the Restless Decade, the Era of Wonderful Nonsense, and Decadent America (Documentary Tube, 2014) help illustrate the fact that the United States was entering a new era and a new way of life for many Americans.

2.3 U.S. Farm Magazines

Farm magazines have been an important part of American history for decades. These publications often focused on the farmer and agricultural issues ranging from livestock husbandry to crops and horticulture. Other sections were directed more to children and wives, and content included jokes, anecdotes, poetry, recipes, health topics, and much more (Demaree, 1941, p. 182). Due to the vast amount of information that was made available to the rural communities, these agricultural publications became known as “a university in a mailbox” (Scruggs & Mosely, 1979, p. 27).

Agricultural periodicals got their start with publications from agricultural societies starting as early as the 1790s. These were often smaller newspapers that did not have a wide readership (Marti, 1980, p. 29). Not until 1810 did the more modern periodicals get their start. One of the first agricultural journals, *The Agricultural Museum,* out of Georgetown (Washington, D.C.), focused primarily on raising sheep. This publication, however, lasted only until 1812 (Lemmer, 1957, p. 4).

One of the foremost influential agricultural magazines that had a longer lifespan was the *American Farmer* that was started in Baltimore on April 2, 1819, by John Stuart Skinner. This publication led to more than 400 agricultural magazines being published by the start of the Civil War (Demaree, 1941, p. 182). In the *American Farmer,* Skinner chose to write on every type of husbandry in order to provide farmers with a choice of reading material. This communication style proved to be very successful, and led to Skinner's recognition by some as the founder of agricultural journalism in America (Lemmber, 1957, p. 6). By 1821, Skinner was concerned that the glut of agricultural publications would prevent any one of them from ever being successful and gaining enough readers. Skinner believed that each publication should be large enough that it could have its own experimental farm from which it could report findings (Lemmer, 1957, pp. 3-4).

While most of the 400 publications of the Civil War era did not last long, every part of the country still had an agricultural publication by 1860 (Demaree, 1941, p. 182). As of 1860, agricultural magazines did not discuss politics or the heavy issue of slavery that was beginning to divide the nation. Demaree (1941) did begin to note a change in

supporting farmers for political offices as tensions began to rise that government was not supporting the farmer (p. 186).

Editors of the original farm magazines came from a wide variety of backgrounds, but many continued to farm while taking on the role of editor for their publications. Demaree (1941) notes that this assumption of dual roles helped lead to the claim that farm editors "could handle the plow as well as the pen" (p. 182). Depending on the periodical, editors had different roles in the type and quantity of their contributions. While some editors simply gathered and made decisions about stories, others wrote over half of the stories featured in their magazines (Demaree, 1941, p. 184).

In the early stages of agricultural journalism, it was not uncommon for editors to mention their personal issues, such as weddings or raising their children, or to name some of their devoted readers by name in their articles. The editors were treated like celebrities of their time as they received gifts and invitations to visit from many of their readers. The relationship between readers and editors of the time was very close and informal as was that among the editors of the various agricultural publications. Generally, the only amount of discord among the editors was when an article was republished without credit between publications (Demaree, 1941, pp. 184-185). Not all farmers during this time subscribed to agricultural magazines, nor did they believe everything that was published in them. Some farmers rejected the idea that agriculture was a science while others did not have the money to try the new methods being proposed in the publications (Damaree, 1941, p. 187).

Agriculturalist Edmund Ruffin in 1851 expressed the importance of farm magazines with the statement that "…American agriculture has made greater progress in

the last thirty years than in all previous time. This greater progress is mainly due to the diffusion of agricultural papers. In the actual absence of all other means, these publications, almost alone, have rendered good service in making known discoveries in the science, and spreading knowledge of improvements in the art of agriculture" (Demaree, 1941, p. 188). The influence of agricultural publications did not stop with the 1860s, however, as it continued into the post-Civil War America. Specifically, farm magazines had a big influence in the South. Agriculture was one of the few entities that held the war-torn South together, and farming publications were a primary vehicle for change. Agriculture seemed to be the best way to rise above the destruction that was a result of the Civil War, and farming magazines helped to promote and communicate the ideas that would allow the South to recover from the war (Scruggs & Moseley, 1979, p. 23).

Among the casualties of the Civil War were the farm magazines that existed prior to the war. Many of the agricultural publications did not continue throughout the war. While few survived, many new publications were formed during this period. This was a time of new magazines, name changes, and the purchasing of many publications by others as publications were undergoing reconstruction and change after the Civil War. During this time, the *Progressive Farmer* alone bought seventeen other publications (Scruggs & Moseley, 1979, p. 24).

The format of post-Civil War journals was different from those published prior to the war in that these publications predominately consisted of three major portions: Editorials from the editor on current major issues, copies of national news stories that were often not credited to their original source, and letters from farmers to the

publication. Sometimes these letters were the only pieces of agricultural material within the publication (Scruggs & Moseley, 1979, p. 24).

Additionally, these agricultural publications attempted to help regulate agriculture for the better and to promote productive changes in rural America (Tucker & Whaley, 2000). For example, the first issue of the *Progressive Farmer* in 1886 called for a North Carolina Agricultural and Mechanical College, and by 1887 this had become a reality through the Morrill Act. Many other major agricultural improvements of this time received publicity and support from farming publications. The major emphasis for many of these farming publications was to improve farming in all aspects, particularly efficiency (Scruggs & Moseley, 1979, p. 26).

By 1920, the Southern states alone had about 67 agricultural publications with over three million in circulation. Despite reliance on mostly local circulation during this time, no other types of publications in the South could match farm magazine circulations (Scruggs & Mosely, 1979, pp. 27-28).

Between 1930 and 1950, many agricultural magazines ceased publication due to economic factors. Scruggs and Moseley (1979) report that by 1979 the *Progressive Farmer* was the only farming magazine that still reached substantial publication in the South. Despite the decline in agricultural publications, the impact they made to the rural communities was long-lasting. These publications gave farmers a connection to the rest of the world. By reading the varied content from different authors, they were no longer completely isolated and became aware of some of the major issues and news of the time. Making this communication possible was another important “innovation” of the early twentieth century: rural free delivery of mail. Additionally, these early farming

magazines became the predecessor to the agricultural reports that would later be broadcast on new media of the era -- radio and television. Many colleges also developed agricultural journalism courses and curricula during this period (Scruggs & Moseley, 1979, pp. 28-29).

A 2005 report indicated that there were at least 226 agricultural magazines in existence as of 2003 (Stuhlfaut, 2005, p. 21). More modern-day agricultural publications still have the intent to make farmers more successful with stories of new technology and scientific breakthroughs in the world of agriculture (Boone, Meisenbach, & Tucker, 2000). Since farmers provide a society with food and other resources, it is important that the information they receive is accurate, up to date, and informative. It is crucial for agricultural publications to be perceived as trustworthy sources. With the increase in technology and science, farmers have had to become more reliant on external sources for their information (Hays & Reisner, 1990, p. 936). Aside from these components of the farming magazines, modern agricultural publications have maintained similar elements throughout the years such as showcasing successful farmers (Walter, 1995, p. 55). Portrayals of the farmer within these publications has a tradition of equating the farmer to high morals and values and even being "divinely sanctioned" (Walter, 1995, p. 56).

Additionally, agricultural businesses use farming publications as a way to promote and advertise new products (Walter, 1995, p. 55). In the last twenty-five years, however, farming magazines, as well as the advertising departments for many agricultural businesses, have experienced consolidation (Lehnert, 1991; Pawlick, 1996).

This has caused concern that farm magazines may begin to cater to and even "sell-out" to advertisers by pulling certain stories and editorials. Allowing advertisers to dictate

editorial content could seriously damage the integrity of these publications (Hays & Reisner, 1990, p. 938). A 1990 mail survey sent to 190 journalists with a 78% response rate showed that around two-thirds of the journalists believed their journals had been threatened by advertisers and half said that advertising had been withdrawn at some point. Losing a major advertiser's support could devastate a farm magazine with a specialized readership and advertising base (Hays & Reisner, 1990, p. 936).

2.4 *Indiana Prairie Farmer* and the John Turnipseed Column

The *Union Agriculturalist and Western Prairie Farmer*, the forerunner to the *Prairie Farmer*, was first published in Chicago, Illinois, in January of 1841 (Evans, 1969, p. 43). Started by John Steven Wright, this publication had a goal of informing pioneers on how to settle land that had previously supported only Native Americans and wildlife. One of the ways the publication achieved this goal was by allowing farmers to contribute to the paper the successes and failures they were experiencing on their land (Budd, 1991a, p. 5). Wright started the publication with a donated $100, and the first issue was eight pages. Two years later in 1843 the publication had attracted 2,000 subscribers and had more than a page of advertising (Budd, 1991b, pp. 6-7).

The publication has had a succession of editors and publication titles throughout the years, becoming first *Emery's Journal of Agriculture and Prairie Farmer* and then by December 22, 1859, it would simply become the *Prairie Farmer.* Throughout the years, the owners of the *Prairie Farmer* purchased other publications and tried other ventures. In December of 1865, the *German Prairie Farmer*, which was published in German, was launched to help serve the growing number of German farmers in the area, but this

publication lasted for only two years (Evans, 1969, pp. 43-44). Additionally, on September, 25, 1902, the *Prairie Farmer Home Magazine for Country Gentlewomen* was added as a 16-page supplement to the *Prairie Farmer.* This addition to the publication was written by women, meant for females, and was of higher quality than the rest of the magazine, but it lasted only until December of 1904 (Evans, 1969, pp. 49-50).

Aside from publishing articles on the present state of Midwestern agriculture and the new inventions that were influencing it, the *Prairie Farmer* also covered a wide array of other topics. From its earlier years, the *Prairie Farmer* promoted education and the need for improved schooling, and during the Civil War the publication provided detailed coverage of the war. For part of the 1800s, there was also a literary section that for a time included Mark Twain (Budd, 1991a, p. 5). It is also known that Abraham Lincoln was a subscriber to *Prairie Farmer* (Budd, 1991b, p. 94).

Throughout the 1800s, the *Prairie Farmer* publication had been successful and resilient by surviving the Civil War, as well as the Chicago fire of 1871 that destroyed the office and printing equiptment. The *Prairie Farmer* also survived heavy competition. Illinois had more agricultural publications than any other state at the beginning of the twentieth century. Illinois had 50 farming magazines while the next closest state, New York, had only 37 (Evans, 1969, p. 62). In 1909, however, the *Prairie Farmer* was experiencing financial trouble, but the new publisher Burridge D. Butler was able to make the necessary changes needed to improve the publication (Evans, 1969, pp. 42-43).

One of the changes that Butler brought to the publication was an increase in circulation. The *Indiana Prairie Farmer* was originally part of the *Prairie Farmer* publication. The number of *Prairie Farmer* subscribers in Indiana was fairly low until

1919 when the publication began to expand into other states. This push by the *Prairie Farmer* to expand led to an increase in subscribers in Indiana from only 4,000 in 1918 to 19,000 in 1919 (Evans, 1969, p. 71) with the population of Indiana in 1918 being approximately 2.8 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). In May of 1923, an Indiana editor and editorial office were established in Indianapolis, and Indiana subscribers began to receive their own edition that had pages focusing on more local news. In January of 1931, the Indiana edition of the *Prairie Farmer* began to offer special advertising and editorial materials. In June of 1939, a Wisconsin edition of the *Prairie Farmer* was started with a staff member placed in Wisconsin to cover editorial material. Later in June of 1944, a Michigan edition was also started (Evans, 1969, p. 71).

In 1922, the *Prairie Farmer* issued a list of nine policy goals supported by the publication. The following platform was published on January 7, 1922:

1. Lower taxes.
2. More of the consumer's dollar for farmers.
3. Make the farm pay in 1922.
4. Reduce the corn acreage.
5. Double the profits from farm poultry.
6. A common sense road building policy.
7. Make life easier for mother.
8. More happiness on the farm.
9. Grow more soybeans (Erb, 1991, p. 33).

These goals show what was important not only to the *Prairie Farmer* publications but also what were crucial topics for farmers in the 1920s.

One component that drew readers to the *Prairie Farmer* during the era of the 1920s was Clifford V. Gregory's use of fictitious characters and stories. These were manifested through such series as "Song of the Lazy Farmer," "Adventures of Slim and Spud," and his most famous, "John Turnipseed." Gregory's fictitious stories were all centered on humorous characters who often found themselves in some funny predicament (Evans, 1969, pp. 69-70).

John Turnipseed "wrote" stories for Gregory beginning on November 4, 1922. As a "reporter," Turnipseed covered meetings, discussed serious subjects like politics and religion, and looked at other issues like love. All of these reports also included Turnipseed's own interpretations and thoughts on the matters. Evans (1969) provides a description of Turnipseed:

> Gregory's most lovable character was his dirt farmer and reporter, John Turnipseed, a man 'who can write entertainingly on any subject under the sun, whether he knows anything about it or not.' Turnipseed was a back-40-acres philosopher who admitted that his name was funny but insisted it was the only one he had, 'and it's good on the bottom of a check, which is more'n some folks can say.' Fairly heavyset with bushy eyebrows and smiling eyes that twinkled with dry wit, he came to readers decked out in his vest, plaid shirt, crinkled hat, and the smelly pipe about which his wife kept scolding him (p. 70).

Turnipseed was often used by Gregory as a device to discuss and analyze current issues from a farmer's point of view. For example, a recurring character in the series was the "Elevator Man" who acted as an antagonist for Turnipseed and all farmers. He was a representation of the middleman who is between farmers and consumers. These types of middlemen were often blamed for the growing gap between the prices received by farmers and those paid by consumers.

Along with agricultural concerns, Gregory discussed more mainstream cultural issues such as education. One of Gregory's primary concerns was improved education through school consolidation. Gregory supported this cause but was still aware of the hardships this would cause rural families as schools were located farther away from farm homes (Erb, 1991, p. 33). Turnipseed discussed these serious issues using first-person narration and colloquial conversation from rural 1926 America.

Turnipseed remained a fixture in the *Indiana Prairie Farmer* until Gregory's departure in 1937. The series would be revitalized in 1947 by Editor Paul C. Johnson for the next 29 years. When Johnson retired, Turnipseed was continued by devoted readers Jerry and Ruth Wall of Coal City, Indiana (Budd, 1991c, p. 120). The Wall family wrote the Turnipseed column for 24 years and authored two books about Turnipseed, *Seed Time & Harvest* and *Consider the Lilies* (Stanley, 2012). Throughout these author changes, Turnipseed also underwent some transformations. Turnipseed was still married to his wife, Martha, and living on his farm by the Wabash River, but Turnipseed's children were grown, and in later years he wrote about his grandchildren. Despite any changes, Turnipseed still offered humorous insight into the issues of agriculture with his less than perfect use of the English language (Budd, 1991c, p. 120). After the Walls' 24 years of

writing John Turnipseed, the *Indiana Prairie Farmer* discontinued the column because of the changing atmosphere in agriculture around the turn of the twenty-first century. Today in the *Indiana Priaire Farmer,* there are no fictionalized pieces that compare to Turnipseed (T. Bechman, personal communication, September 17, 2015).

The characters and stories within the *Indiana Prairie Farmer* sometimes came to life outside of the pages of the publication. One Indiana auctioneer memorized over 200 "Songs of the Lazy Farmer" that he would sing anytime there was a lull in the bidding. Others would dress as the Lazy Farmer and his wife for social events and act out the amusing antics of these fictional characters (Evans, 1969, p. 69).

Of course, the content of the *Prairie Farmer* consisted of more than just these fictional pieces. A typical magazine in 1926 consisted of a wide array of stories and editorials for all members of a farming household. During this time the publication was a four-column, tabloid style with a size of 10.25 inches by 14.5 inches. While there were illustrations, color was only available as spot color and was most often used on the covers and in select advertisements. The length of the magazine fluctuated between about 30 to 40 pages with some of the summer editions having only about 20 pages. The smaller magazines in the summer were probably due to the additional work many farmers experienced in the warmer months. Longer days and nicer weather meant farmers could be outside doing their farm chores which meant they had less time to read and correspond with a magazine.

Although the *Indiana Prairie Farmer* was an agricultural publication, it contained more than just farming news. The *Indiana Prairie Farmer* offered a section for all of its readers regardless of gender, age, or interest, which helped to increase its popularity. The

popularity of the *Indiana Prairie Farmer* can be inferred from data about its Illinois counterpart as shown in Figure 2.1. In just one county of Illinois, there is hardly an area that does not have a subscriber to the *Prairie Farmer.* Additionally, in the upper-left corner of Figure 2.1, there is an example of the signs many readers of the *Prairie Farmer* had on display outside of their homes to let others know they received and read this publication. These signs showcases the pride many families felt at receiving the publication.

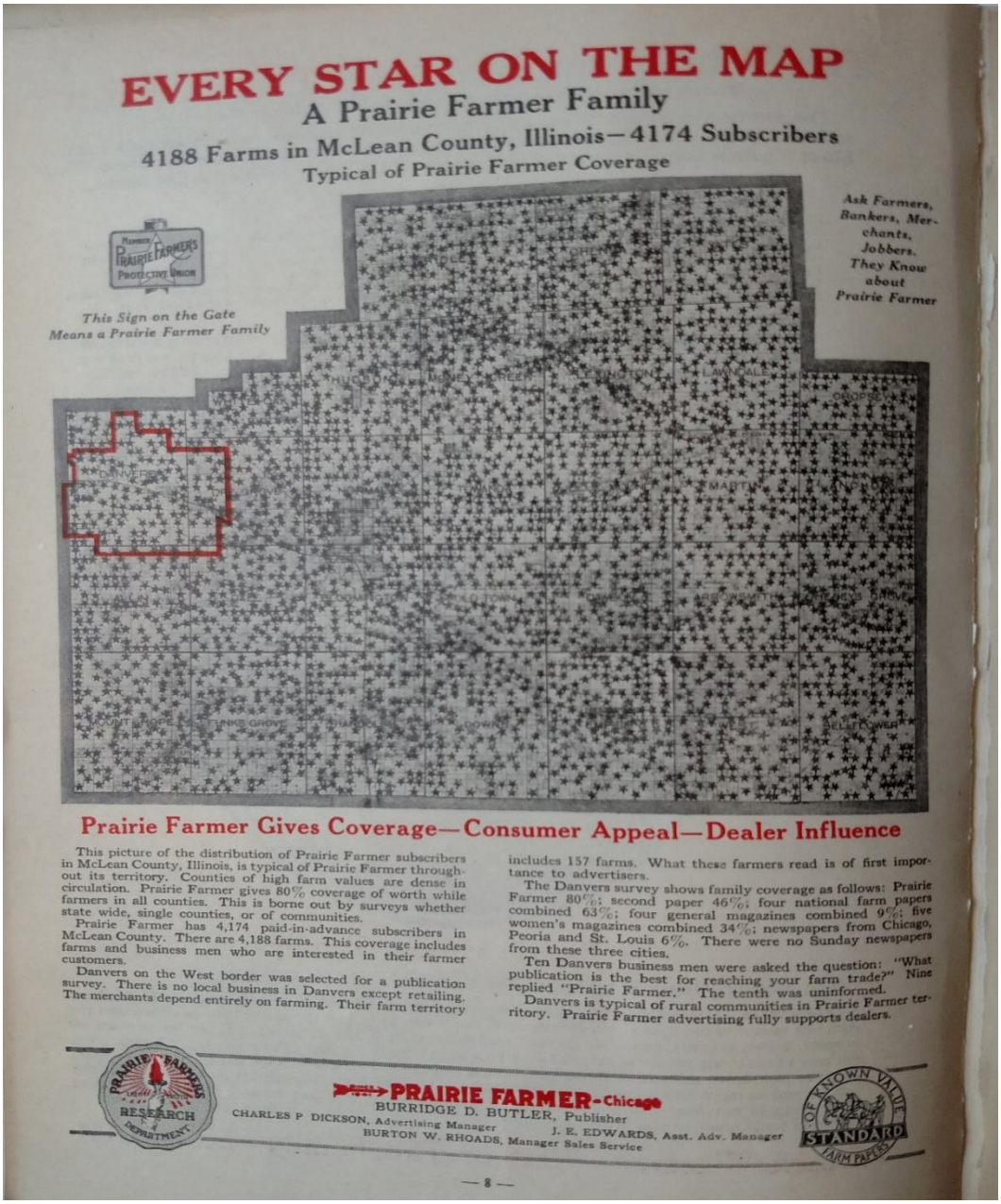


Figure 2.1 *Prairie Farmer* Coverage Map of McLean County, Illinois, 1926

In 1926, a typical *Prairie Farmer* magazine had a hand-drawn cover that depicted some element of life at that time. Sometimes the covers were colored using spot color, and sometimes the covers would be part of a multi-week series or theme. Figure 2.2

showcases the use of spot color while the second image (Fig. 2.3) displays a cover that is part of a multi-week series. The focus of this series is “farming around the world,” so each week a different part of the world’s agricultural techniques was illustrated with a brief description. The covers also provide the number of weekly *Prairie Farmer* subscribers.

Figure 2.2 Typical *Indiana Prairie Farmer* Cover from 1926

Figure 2.3 Typical *Indiana Prairie Farmer* Cover as Part of a Series from 1926

Beyond the cover, hand-drawn illustrated advertisements adorn the pages throughout the *Prairie Farmer* for such companies as Studebaker, Montgomery Ward & Co., John Deere, and others. Most copies of the publication begin with important and timely stories in the field of agriculture. The "Master Farmer" column is also located at the beginning of the magazine. This is a weekly feature that showcases a successful farmer in the reading area. Smaller columns that can be found throughout the *Prairie Farmer* are "The Song of the Lazy Farmer," "John Turnipseed," "Sparks from the News," "Farm Gossip" and "The Radio Man." "The Song of the Lazy Farmer" and "John Turnipseed" are fictional columns while "Sparks from the News" provides a couple of sentences on a variety of news stories from around the world. "Farm Gossip" adds jokes and comic relief while "The Radio Man" provides listings for next week's radio programs. Additionally, there is a weekly section for photographs from readers as well as a place for editor's comments in "the Editor's Haymow" and reader editorials in "What the Neighbors Say."

Areas of life and farming that are given their own sections in the *Prairie Farmer* are soils and crops, poultry, dairy, livestock, and news from the *Prairie Farmer's* Protective Union. "Home and Households" and "Our Junior Page" portions provide content for children and housewives such as recipes, tips, stories, comics, lessons, and a weekly scripture reading. Religion and education are also represented in their own columns "Our Weekly Sermon" and "The Country School." Some stories were not published long-term such as "Bringing Back the Bacon: A Farm Detective Story." This was a fictionalized detective series that ran for a few weeks until the story reached its conclusion. Most editions of the *Prairie Farmer* ended with a classifieds section.

The *Prairie Farmer* publication fluctuated in the frequency it was issued. Beginning on October 4, 1919, the publication began as a weekly rather than bi-weekly. The *Prairie Farmer* continued this schedule until May 30, 1931 (Evans, 1969, p. 68). Circulation was strong during this time with the publication gaining by the thousands in just one year. For example, circulation increased from 180,000 in 1926 (Prairie Farmer, 1926) to 200,000 in 1927 (Prairie Farmer, 1927). Indiana's subscribers alone increased from 26,952 in 1926 (Prairie Farmer, 1926) to 38,102 in 1927 (Prairie Farmer, 1927).

Additionally, the *Prairie Farmer* published an annual report known as *Prairie Farmer's Farm Market Book for Prairie Farmer Territory.* This publication provided information and numbers for the readers of *Prairie Farmer* on various elements of agriculture and farming. The report's foreword stated that it "…provides reliable information on *Prairie Farmer* and the rich farming area it serves. There is no greater concentration of paid circulation and farm buying power in the world" (Prairie Farmer, 1927). One of the primary uses of this book was to help sales managers and traveling salesmen better understand the area where they were trying to sell their goods. Copies of this book included numbers and statistics for population, types of agricultural products produced by county, number of automobiles, and other statistics. The book also emphasized that the *Prairie Farmer* territory had some of the best trade due to the railroads and paved roads surrounding the area that connected people to big cities such as Indianapolis and Chicago (Prairie Farmer, 1926).

Reports from the *Prairie Farmer's Farm Market Book* reveal that the *Prairie Farmer* was the preferred publication by many farmers in the area. Surveys showed that farmers preferred the *Prairie Farmer* five times greater than six other agricultural

publications combined. This even included five national magazines. Not only was the *Prairie Farmer* delivered to almost every farm that received another farming publication, but it also reached an extensive number of farms where it was the only agricultural publication. Additionally, women on farms preferred *Prairie Farmer.* Of the 243 females who responded to a magazine-led survey, 78% said they preferred the *Prairie Farmer* to five different national agricultural publications (Prairie Farmer, 1927).

While the publication enjoyed a successful decade in the 1920s, the 1930s were a time of change for the *Prairie Farmer.* Regional and national farming magazines began to rise in popularity beginning in the 1930s, and these publications had also changed their appearance. They were now more magazine-like with more color and coated stock paper, yet they were still competitively priced. During the rise of these publications, the *Prairie Farmer* was experiencing financial troubles with major decreases in advertising and subscriptions. From 1928 to 1933, advertising income fell from $738,437 to $182,639 while income from subscriptions fell from $178,431 to $62,507 (Evans, 1969, pp. 82-84).

Indiana was able to maintain strong numbers for the *Prairie Farmer* due to the lack of any other significant state farm publications in the state. In 1918, the circulation in Indiana was only 4,000, but by 1937 this grew to a maximum of 110,000 subscribers. Indiana consistently provided about one-third of the *Prairie Farmer's* total paid subscribers. One way that Indiana helped to maintain the strong numbers was through a county-by-county campaign that included an entertainment show and ended with a circulation manager campaigning for subscriptions (Evans, 1969, p. 86).

With the emergence of radio at the beginning of the twentieth century, the public was able to tune into news and entertainment at the turn of a knob, and farmers were no

different. They realized that they could tune in to hear about the current agricultural news of the time. WLS went on the air on April 12, 1924, and primarily provided agricultural programming (Evans, 1969, pp. 161-163). The *Prairie Farmer* expressed interest in radio and worked with WLS from its onset, but on October 1, 1928, the *Prairie Farmer* became more serious with its radio involvement when it purchased WLS from Sears-Roebuck (Evans, 1969, p. 175). Once the *Prairie Farmer* had control of WLS, they incorporated farm, news, women's, school, and special programming. They were focused on making this a family-centered station that even had its own station pastor who offered religious programming (Evans, 1969, pp. 183-196). Fictional characters from the *Prairie Farmer* such as Turnipseed and the Lazy Farmer also had their own programs on WLS (Evans, 1969, p. 170).

Today, the *Indiana Prairie Farmer* continues to be the major state farm magazine in Indiana. Just as agriculture was changing over the decades, the *Indiana Prairie Farmer* transformed as well. In the last few decades, the ownership changed frequently. From the 1960s to present day, the *Indiana Prairie Farmer* has had six different owners: Capital Cities/ABC, The Walt Disney Company, Rural Press Ltd., Fairfax Media Ltd., and current owner Penton Media. One of the current areas of focus for the present-day *Indiana Prairie Farmer* is attracting younger commercial farmers. The magazine is also trying to upgrade its columns and using reader focus groups. The current circulation of the *Indiana Prairie Farmer* is between 25,000 and 30,000 (T. Bechman, personal communication, September 17, 2015). Since its beginning days, the *Indiana Prairie Farmer* has continued to educate and inform readers about current trends in agriculture.

As trends in agriculture changed throughout the remainder of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, the *Indiana Prairie Farmer* was there to report it.

2.5 New Historicism

Theories and criticism are an integral part of social science scholarship because they force researchers to ask questions. The application of theory challenges researchers to question self-evident observations and facts. The process of critical thinking leads to further questions, and the way one thinks can ultimately change the way he or she acts (Nealon & Giroux, 2012, p. 5).

The current research uses literary criticism and theory to guide the investigation. Literary criticism is "the art or practice of judging and commenting on the qualities and character of literary works…some [critics] analyze texts as self-contained entities, in isolation from external factors, while others discuss them in terms of spheres such as biography, history, Marxism, or feminism" (Oxford Dictionary, 2015, Literary Criticism section). The concept of literary criticism involves critics looking through various lenses depending on the theory or criticism being applied (Brizee, Tompkins, Chernouski, & Boyle, 2015). Each criticism allows critics to focus on a specific part of a text that is of interest. Having the ability to focus on one important area allows the scope of the research to be narrowed and key areas to be studied. Critics and theorists are able to look through these various lenses because, as Nealon and Giroux (2012) observe, the author and the author's intentions are not solely in control of the meaning of the work. The reader may construct a very different meaning than what the author initially intended (p.

16). As the critics look through their various lenses, they may uncover a variety of different meanings.

New Historicism is the literary criticism employed in the current analysis. New Historicism was developed by Stephen Greenblatt and his University of California, Berkeley, colleagues during the 1980s (Cantor, 1993, p. 22). Several components form the overall definition of "New Historicism," but a simple premise of the theory is that it is based on both the history of the text as well as the history of the critic (Brizee, Tompkins, Chernouski, & Boyle, 2012; CliffsNotes, 2014). According to the Purdue University Online Writing Lab, "New Historicism assumes that every work is a product of the historic moment that created it... New historicists do not believe that we can look at history objectively, but rather that we interpret events as products of our time and culture" (Brizee, Tompkins, Chernouski, & Boyle, 2012, It's All Relative section, para. 3). Another definition of New Historicism is provided by Berghahn (1992), who feels that it has "become almost commonplace to define New Historicism with the formula: 'The historicity of the texts and the textuality of history'" (p. 144). Some critics supply definitions which consider that New Historicism is not quite a theory and is definitely not a method, but instead could be described "as a sensibility or perspective on literature" (Hens-Piazza, 2002, p. 6). Many of the sources agree, however, that there is no single definition for New Historicism, so while these examples offer some varied and basic definitions of the theory, there are many more parts of New Historicism that must be considered to fully understand it.

The Purdue University Online Writing Lab identifies typical questions asked when applying the theory of New Historicism. Some of the typical questions asked for a New Historicist analysis include:

1. What language/characters/events present in the work reflect the current events of the author's day?
2. Are there words in the text that have changed their meaning from the time of the writing?
3. How are events' interpretation and presentation a product of the culture of the author?
4. Does the work's presentation support or condemn the event?
5. How can we use a literary work to "map" the interplay of both traditional and subversive discourses circulating in the culture in which that work emerged and/or the cultures in which the work has been interpreted?
6. How does the work consider traditionally marginalized populations? (Brizee, Tompkins, Chernouski, & Boyle, 2012, Typical Questions section).

These questions provide a general framework for understanding the focus of many scholars who employ New Historicism in their research.

New Historicism was developed in response to New Criticism, a prominent literary theory in the 1960s and 1970s (Cantor, 1993, p. 22) as well as Deconstructionism (Berghahn, 1992, p.143). While New Criticism analyzes literature only in its literary form, New Historicism allows other factors, such as the culture of the time, to be analyzed along with the literary text (Cantor, 1993, p. 22). Specifically, New Historicism draws many of its major ideas from a wide variety of people and ideas including

"…[Clifford] Geertz's cultural anthropology, [Michel] Foucault's discourse theory, [Mikhail] Bakhtin's dialogical method and even [Roman] Jacobson's structural poetics…" (Berghahn, 1992, p. 143).

Of these contributors, Foucault and Geertz may be the most significant. Foucault greatly influenced New Historicism with his idea that literature is a process and not just a set of finished texts. More specifically, literature is an intrinsically social process that is connected by the establishments who control the movement of power and knowledge to a society. Foucault had very distinct views on both history and text. He rejected the linear model of history and instead believed that every era is more complicated than the last and always different from each other. He believed no single occurrence causes an event in history, but rather all disciplines work together to form a more complicated view of history. Foucault considered texts to be in broad categories that allow connections to be drawn amongst text and encourage intertextual interpretations (Hens-Piazza, 2002, pp. 10-11). He also recalled a time when literary works did not need an author to validate them. Scientific texts did need authors to ensure validation, but this was not necessary for literary works. This perception would change by the eighteenth century when scientific works were accepted on their own merit and considered truths without reference to an author. In contrast, literary texts were deemed worthy according to their authorship, which meant the author held complete power over the meaning of the text (Nealon & Giroux, 2012, p. 17).

Geertz's contributions included the construct of "thick description," and he viewed culture as text. This perspective allowed him to review the smallest details of the time and to understand in his field of anthropology that it is a study of the present day's

constructs of the past's constructs (Hens-Piazza, 2002, p. 13). Some New Historicists feel their work has a connection with Karl Marx in terms of struggle and power relations while others reject this claim (Hens-Piazza, 2002, p. 10). These intellectual contributions helped form the theory of New Historicism in response to the New Criticism and Deconstructionism theories that dominated the literary world.

Although New Historicism was formed as a response to the major literary theories of the 1960s and 1970s, other periods in history have witnessed a change in literary theory as well. In fact, New Criticism emerged in opposition to the historical context, Old Historicism, being studied in the 1930s and 1940s. There are, of course, differences between the Old Historicism from the early twentieth century and the New Historicism introduced by Greenblatt. Cantor (1993) explains that New Historicism is considered "new" because it is less confined than older views of historicism (p. 23). In addition, Greenblatt (1990) explains in his essay, "Resonance and Wonder," that the two traits referenced in his essay title distinguish New Historicism from Old Historicism. The Old Historicism of the early twentieth century does not possess *resonance,* which Greenblatt defines as "…the power of the displayed object to reach out beyond its formal boundaries to a larger world, to evoke in the viewer the complex, dynamic cultural forces from which it has emerged and for which it may be taken by a viewer to stand" as well as the *wonder* which he defines as "the power of the displayed object to stop the viewer in his or her tracks, to convey an arresting sense of uniqueness, to evoke an exalted attention" (p. 42). The ideas of *resonance* and *wonder* are key aspects to Greenblatt's perception of New Historicism and without them it could not be considered New Historicism. They are qualities that distinguish New Historicism from Old Historicism.

Additionally, Pieters (2000) reports that the difference between the two literary theories for Greenblatt is that New Historicism is not a form of historicism. According to the definitions of "historicism" that are given by the *American Heritage Dictionary*, Greenblatt's view of New Historicism argues against the definitions of historicism. "The *American Heritage Dictionary* gives three meanings for the term '*historicism*': 1.The belief that processes are at work in history that man can do little to alter. 2. The theory that the historian must avoid all value judgments in his study of past periods or former cultures. 3. Veneration of the past or of tradition" (p. 23). Each of these three definitions of "historicism" contrast with Greenblatt's view of New Historicism. New Historicism actually has no connection to history as a field. Thus, Old Historicism and New Historicism may share part of a name, but the identities of these two theories are different from one another and may have even less in common with historicism itself.

With this discrepancy of "old" versus "new" comes the idea that New Historicism may not be properly named and identified. Some alternate names that have been considered in the literature are "the new history," "historical-materialist criticism," "cultural materialism," and "critical historicism" (Hens-Piazza, 2002, p. 5). Greenblatt has described New Historicism more as a "poetics of culture" (Hens-Piazza, 2002, p. 5). Regardless of the name New Historicism should embrace, the fact that there is such disagreement on its name illustrates the difficulty in pinpointing the theory's true essence.

In addition to the difficulty in defining New Historicism and its history, it is difficult to determine a standard form of analysis associated with New Historicism. In fact, the book that Gallagher and Greenblatt (2002) co-authored argues that "New

Historicism is not a repeatable methodology or a literary critical program" (p. 19). While not having a standard methodology or analysis can be challenging, it does make New Historicism more accessible to other areas of study because it can be applied to a wide variety of literature and history.

Originally designed to study the Renaissance era, New Historicism has since expanded far beyond this era. New Historicists may argue by anecdote, and they are not strictly confined to a certain time period. This freedom allows New Historicism to be applied to more modern historical writings (Cantor, 1993, p.23). As New Historicism became prominent, it reached beyond the Renaissance era and even beyond the realm of literature. In fact, Greenblatt's (1990) essay "Resonance and Wonder" discusses New Historicism more in terms of artwork than literature. Examples that Greenblatt uses in this essay to express the ideas of "resonance and wonder" include the State Jewish Museum in Prague and a Coke™ stand at an ancient Mayan pyramid. These two examples are not only far-removed from the Renaissance era but also from the realm of text and literature.

While the definitions and history provide a background for New Historicism, other specific elements must be considered in fully understanding the theory. According to Cantor (1993), historicists must include "the conviction that the era in which people live completely limits the options available to them as thinking beings" (p. 26). Thus, New Historicists believe that people in past eras were unable to conceive of some of the thoughts people have today. The example given in Cantor (1993) is that of atheism. Historicists believe that during the Renaissance atheism did not exist, and the people of

the time would have been unable to imagine a concept such as atheism in the time they lived.

Greenblatt is even clearer in his beliefs with the view that the newest of college freshmen today are freer in their thinking than any of the great intellectuals from distant history merely because they were born in a more recent era and have more thoughts available to them (pp. 26-27). Essentially, New Historicists believe that people from past eras were limited in their thinking because of the time period in which they lived. People today have more freedom in the way they think as well as the variety of texts available to them. This key feature of New Historicism must be considered when studying older texts and incorporating modern ideas.

Additionally, New Historicists view all written articles as text. Historic documents are treated the same as fictional items (Cantor, 1993, p. 23). The vision of everything being viewed as text means that fictional work has the same leverage as historic facts. Some critics argue that fictional works cannot recreate the past but can only reflect upon it and that New Historicists are concealing the actual history of the time (Berghahn, 1992, p. 144). Also, New Historicists are not focused on traditional principles of historical argument, but rather they embrace the concept of "homologies," which draws analogies between unrelated phenomena (Cantor, 1993, p. 23). Cantor (1993) describes the motto of New Historicism as "I can connect anything with anything" (p. 24). With this being said, one criticism associated with New Historicism is that it requires less knowledge and understanding of history than the Old Historicism approach (Cantor, 1993, p. 23).

New Historicism allows all types of texts to be studied. For example, more than just political and military histories can be analyzed. These histories may be mixed with more social or private histories. Specifically, "New Historicists seem to delight in anecdotes, heterogeneous narratives and 'thick descriptions' that illuminate literature from the margins without constructing a causal or monological relationship with it. They are interested in the various discourses that inform literature rather than in recovering the meaning of a work" (Berghahn, 1992, p. 144). The ability to analyze more mundane and everyday activities provides additional freedom for New Historicists to explore the time period (Cantor, 1993, p. 24). By merging different types of literary works, New Historicism downplays any division associated with high and low cultures (Berghahn, 1992, p. 144). Thus, Cantor (1993) believes that there is an agenda with New Historicism, which is to focus on the suppressed characters of these works and to diminish the nature of genius and superiority to an everyday level (p. 25).

As one of the earlier definitions described, "New historicists do not believe that we can look at history objectively, but rather that we interpret events as products of our time and culture" (Brizee, Tompkins, Chernouski, & Boyle, 2012, It's All Relative section, para. 3). New Historicism does not focus solely on past cultures and their written texts but also incorporates the element of present day. Hens-Piazza (2002) writes that "texts are caught up in the social processes and contexts out of which they emerge. Though identified with a single author, texts are generated by a community. This community produces a text while another community reads it and thus are its consumers. Hence, New Historicism trains its view upon the processes of production and consumption of text" (p. 6). Similarly, Greenblatt's (1990) concept of resonance that was

discussed earlier shows that his "concern with literary texts has been to reflect upon the historical circumstances of their original production and consumption and to analyze the relationship between these circumstances and our own" (p. 43). Not only do Greenblatt's words showcase the idea that a text's entire culture helps to form it, but they also help to explain the importance of recognizing that today's society is mixed with the past.

From the time that New Historicism has emerged, Gallagher and Greenblatt (2001) recognize four distinct changes that have occurred, which they attribute to this theory. The changes include "art" being reviewed and discussed more as "representations," a change in viewing history from materialist explanations to exploring the human subject, discovering contexts of literary works through supplemental material, and replacing ideology critique with discourse analysis (p. 17). Thus, New Historicism has had significant intellectual repercussions beyond the literary world.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology and analysis used in this research. The chapter begins with an overview of the research design, followed by procedures used to select the text for analysis. Next, the analysis is described, followed by limitations. The chapter concludes with the researcher's statement on methodology.

3.2 Research Design

This study uses the literary theory of New Historicism to analyze text of the John Turnipseed column from the 1926 issue of *Indiana PrairieFarmer* magazine. The goal in a literary analysis is to provide a framework for reading a text, which allows critics to take different insights and meanings from it. Basic assumptions of this analysis are that it is a reflection of the author and the time period in which it was developed. The object of the critic is to analyze and understand these assumptions while considering his or her own placement in history. The overall goal of this literary analysis is to provide insight into the text as well as the culture that produced it and to acknowledge the critic's role in this process.

3.3 Text Selection

The idea for the research conducted in this thesis was formed through my current area of study in agricultural communication and my past English undergraduate degree. I wanted to combine these two disciplines within the pages of this thesis. After long periods of brainstorming, reading literature, and consulting with my advisor, I formulated the idea of analyzing fictional content within an agricultural publication. I considered how, throughout history, written publications were the only media form of information and entertainment. Thus, I focused on identifying historical publications that offered fictional content. Through a sequence of emails to editors and writers of various agricultural publications, I was able to learn of numerous fictional series published in their journals.

Rather than focusing on a national agricultural publication, I decided to analyze a state farm magazine. Ultimately, I selected the *Indiana Prairie Farmer* magazine for analysis due to its proximity to Purdue University and its history and reputation in the state of Indiana. Within the *Indiana Prairie Farmer*, I decided to focus my analysis on the John Turnipseed column, which was recommended to me by one of the state farm magazine editors with whom I corresponded during my literature review.

I began my analysis by reading the *Indiana Prairie Farmer* between the years of 1926 and 1932. The earliest year of the publication available at the Purdue University Library was 1926. Therefore, I started with the 1926 year. After reviewing this year, I reviewed the immediate years following 1926 to find what fictional stories were being published during this time. In order to have enough material to analyze, I needed to find a recurring column of substantial length. Not only did Turnipseed fit the criterion of

fictional content, it was also published regularly, was of sufficient length, and was immensely popular with its readers. At the time of its inception, Turnipseed was written by the magazine's editor, Clifford Gregory, which provides additional insight into the editorial opinions and philosophy of the *Indiana Prairie Farmer.*

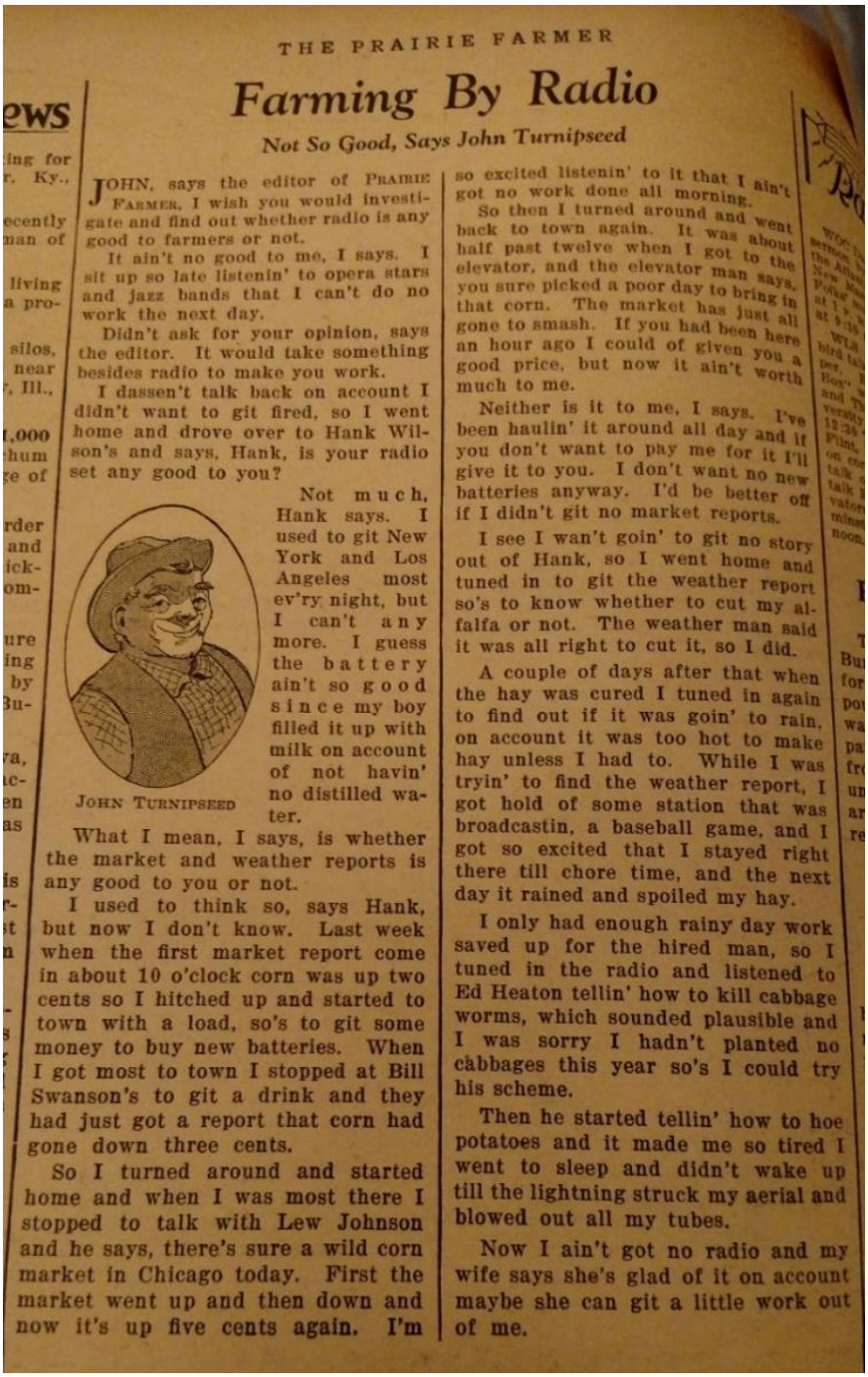
Once the publication and fictional series were selected, I spent hours reviewing the magazine as well as the John Turnipseed columns in the archival library at Purdue University. I selected the year 1926 for analysis due to its place in history. The 1920s were a decade of change and transition for the U.S. In addition, 1926 was positioned between the two major world events: World War I and the Great Depression.

The year 1926 was also important in terms of the magazine. The *Indiana Prairie Farmer* became its own entity separate from the Illinois edition of the *Prairie Farmer* in May of 1923 (Evans, 1969, p. 71). Additionally, 1926 was one of the lucrative years for the *Prairie Farmer* publications. It was also one of the last years before a new era of changes was brought about in the 1930s by regional and national farming publications (Evans, 1969, p. 82). In 1926, Turnipseed was still being published on a weekly basis rather than less frequently as it was in later years.

Education and the lives of females were the historical factors analyzed in this research. The literary theory of New Historicism was used to guide the analysis. A characteristic of the theory is its capacity to allow literature to be analyzed in the culture of both the author and the critic (Brizee, Tompkins, Chernouski, & Boyle, 2012). This premise fits well with the purpose of the thesis in showcasing how the *Indiana Prairie Farmer* and John Turnipseed reflect the culture of 1926 in terms of education and the lives of females.

3.4 New Historicist Analysis

As a first step in the analysis, I took pictures of all the Turnipseed columns published in 1926. This step was necessary due to the fragile nature of the archived magazines and the limited hours of the library archives from which they could not be removed. Fig. 3.1 displays an image of one of the 1926 Turnipseed columns included in the analysis. Table 3.1 provides titles and descriptive notes for all 51 of the 1926 Turnipseed columns included in this analysis.



THE PRAIRIE FARMER

Farming By Radio

Not So Good, Says John Turnipseed

JOHN, says the editor of PRAIRIE FARMER, I wish you would investigate and find out whether radio is any good to farmers or not.

It ain't no good to me, I says. I sit up so late listenin' to opera stars and jazz bands that I can't do no work the next day.

Didn't ask for your opinion, says the editor. It would take something besides radio to make you work.

I dassen't talk back on account I didn't want to git fired, so I went home and drove over to Hank Wilson's and says, Hank, is your radio set any good to you?

JOHN TURNIPSEED

Not much, Hank says. I used to git New York and Los Angeles most ev'ry night, but I can't any more. I guess the battery ain't so good since my boy filled it up with milk on account of not havin' no distilled water.

What I mean, I says, is whether the market and weather reports is any good to you or not.

I used to think so, says Hank, but now I don't know. Last week when the first market report come in about 10 o'clock corn was up two cents so I hitched up and started to town with a load, so's to git some money to buy new batteries. When I got most to town I stopped at Bill Swanson's to git a drink and they had just got a report that corn had gone down three cents.

So I turned around and started home and when I was most there I stopped to talk with Lew Johnson and he says, there's sure a wild corn market in Chicago today. First the market went up and then down and now it's up five cents again. I'm so excited listenin' to it that I ain't got no work done all morning.

So then I turned around and went back to town again. It was about half past twelve when I got to the elevator, and the elevator man says, you sure picked a poor day to bring in that corn. The market has just all gone to smash. If you had been here an hour ago I could of given you a good price, but now it ain't worth much to me.

Neither is it to me, I says. I've been haulin' it around all day and if you don't want to pay me for it I'll give it to you. I don't want no new batteries anyway. I'd be better off if I didn't git no market reports.

I see I wan't goin' to git no story out of Hank, so I went home and tuned in to git the weather report so's to know whether to cut my alfalfa or not. The weather man said it was all right to cut it, so I did.

A couple of days after that when the hay was cured I tuned in again to find out if it was goin' to rain, on account it was too hot to make hay unless I had to. While I was tryin' to find the weather report, I got hold of some station that was broadcastin, a baseball game, and I got so excited that I stayed right there till chore time, and the next day it rained and spoiled my hay.

I only had enough rainy day work saved up for the hired man, so I tuned in the radio and listened to Ed Heaton tellin' how to kill cabbage worms, which sounded plausible and I was sorry I hadn't planted no cabbages this year so's I could try his scheme.

Then he started tellin' how to hoe potatoes and it made me so tired I went to sleep and didn't wake up till the lightning struck my aerial and blowed out all my tubes.

Now I ain't got no radio and my wife says she's glad of it on account maybe she can git a little work out of me.

Figure 3.1 Typical John Turnipseed column, 1926, *Indiana Prairie Farmer* magazine

Table 3.1 Titles and Date of Publication for John Turnipseed Columns, 1926, *Indiana Prairie Farmer* magazine

Date of Publication for 1926 John Turnipseed columns	Titles of 1926 John Turnipseed Columns
January 2	About New Year's Resolutions
January 9	John Loses His Appendix
January 16	Too Many Guessers
January 23	John's Lawsuit
January 30	All About the Surplus Problem
February 13	A Hard Times Story
February 20	Help From Congress
February 27	Following a Good Example
March 6	Getting Along with Folks
March 13	Expert Advice Not So Good
March 20	Advice is No Good
March 27	Aunt Em's Spring Fever Cure
April 3	John Gets More Advice
April 10	John Tries Chicken Stealing
April 17	John Got His Chickens Back
May 1	John Is Off the School Board
May 8	John Gets Stuck In the Mud
May 15	Farming By Radio
May 23	John Is No Bookkeeper
May 29	John Discusses the North Pole
June 5	Summer Style Hints for Men
June 12	John Talks About Advice
June 19	John Discusses Bulletins
June 26	John Gases His Rats
July 3	John Has Farm Relief Plan
July 10	John Discusses Perpetual Motion
July 17	When You Fall In Love
July 24	John's Experience In Court
July 31	Its Never Too Hot to Argue
August 7	Facts about Daylight Saving
August 14	The Cost of Getting Elected
August 21	All About the French Debt
August 28	Sleeping in Church
September 4	Extra! -- All About the Tariff!
September 11	John Makes a Speech
September 18	John Is All Wet
September 25	John Tries Town Life
October 2	The Story of A 'Possum Hunt

Table 3.1 Continued

October 9	John Almost Goes to Jail
October 16	Advice to Milkmen
October 23	Advance Dope on the Election
October 30	A Lesson In Antiques
November 6	Johnny Loses The Debate
November 13	Doctors Are Out of Date
November 20	All the Comforts of Home
November 27	John Gets His Pipe Back
December 4	Company for Dinner
December 11	Do Farmers Work Hard Enough?
December 18	Marrying Off The Bachelors
December 25	John Writes to Santa Claus

There are 51 Turnipseed columns in 1926 with only a couple editions of the *Indiana Prairie Farmer* missing the Turnipseed column. The Turnipseed articles were usually located within the first few pages of the magazine along with other weekly columns. They filled about one-third of the large magazine paper. Turnipseed used first-person narration and a rural colloquial dialect from 1926, which varied from the more traditional journalism of the other articles found in the *Indiana Prairie Farmer* of the day. More information about the Turnipseed column can be found in Chapter 2.

As part of a careful reading of all the Turnipseed columns, I looked for important and repeating themes. Integral to New Historicist analysis is the need to place events in their historic context. Therefore, I also maintained attention on the prominence and importance of farming publications during this time. In addition, I investigated the general history surrounding 1926 and American life during this period, specifically focusing on the two historical factors of education and the lives of females.

Literature review on the history of agricultural publications and the *Indiana Prairie Farmer* included a Purdue University Library system search for books and

articles on the subject. I read and took notes about general farm publications as well as the *Prairie Farmer.* I also reviewed literature to gain a deeper understanding of 1920s America. Examining literature about the entire decade provides a more complex understanding of the culture at this point in history. Websites, books, and journal publications formed the basis for the literature review.

In addition to using the Purdue University Library system, my academic advisor and I traveled to Indianapolis, Indiana, in July of 2015 to explore and find additional sources to support my literature review. We first visited the Indiana State Library which allowed us to explore original copies of the *Indiana Prairie Farmer* beyond what was available through the Purdue University Library system. Specifically, we looked at the years 1925, 1926, and 1927. Notes were taken on any patterns or themes that were observed. I also took digital pictures of five of the complete magazines from 1926 for the months January, April, July, October, and December in order to analyze publication content. Although the current analysis is focused on the John Turnipseed columns, it is important to know the surrounding content within the magazine to gain an understanding of all aspects of the *Prairie Farmer.* Looking at the various issues of the publication is necessary to identify themes and form generalizations from the publication as well as the era. One of the goals of the analysis was to observe what a standard magazine looked like in 1926 by identifying consistent elements between the months. By fully understanding the content within the *Indiana Prairie Farmer*, I had a better understanding of what was deemed important both during the 1920s as well as to the *Prairie Farmer* publication.

The Indiana State Library also provided access to the *Prairie Farmer's Data Service* from both 1926 and 1927. These primary sources showcase publication and

audience data that was collected by the *Prairie Farmer.* Additionally, the state library archives photographs of rural life from the 1920s era, some of which were included in the Appendix. I also obtained access to photographs at the Indiana Historical Society as well as the Karnes Archives & Special Collections at the Purdue University Library. Once I had a firm understanding of the historical background, I began the text analysis.

The literary theory used to guide this analysis, New Historicism, does not identify specific or strict methodological rules for its use. Rather, the theory provides a framework for which material may be analyzed. Another way to describe the use of New Historicism is the metaphor of a lens through which the critic can focus his or her analysis. More specifically, "New Historicism assumes that every work is a product of the historic moment that created it... New historicists do not believe that we can look at history objectively, but rather that we interpret events as products of our time and culture" (Brizee, Tompkins, Chernouski, & Boyle, 2012, It's All Relative section, para. 3). New Historicism views a text as a product of the culture of its time, yet the current reader must also understand that his or her society and culture are also influencing their reading of the text. According to the literary theoretical perspective, there are many ways to read and interpret a text. New Historcism provides one way.

While New Historicism provides a specific way of analyzing a work, many examples can be cited from the literature of New Historicism's application to a wide spectrum of topics. The examples cited below help showcase not only the versatility of the theory but also the lens from which the critic analyzes while using New Historicism. Steinbach's (2007) thesis uses New Historicism to analyze a completely different subject and texts. His thesis focuses on the empire in the American West through texts such as

Wister's *The Virginian*, Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, and McCarthy's *All the Pretty Horses.* These examples provide diverse uses of New Historicism as well as provide an example of how a critic may use New Historicism as a framework for analysis. Steinbach forms the conclusion that Western narratives help to further the entire empire of the West. Steinbach finds that the closing of the West in the late 1800s generated a new Romanticism for the West within the narratives that depicted it.

Giacoppe (2000) uses New Historicism to look at the portrayal of the lives of females. Giacoppe analyzes fictional pieces written by women in an effort to provide a more complete history. Using New Historicism as one of her theoretical frameworks, Giacoppe develops the conclusion that the works she analyzes produce an unknown history. While most of American history is focused on the white man's story, Giacoppe is able to use New Historicism to tell a history from a female perspective.

A more traditional use of New Historicism is prevalent in Thomas's (1997) dissertation that analyzes numerous Shakespearean plays and their costume decision. Through analyzing the costumes and culture of Shakespeare's era, Thomas is able to conclude that the costumes presented a conflicting message with the authority of the time and were used as a way to undermine the social, political, and religious messages found within the plays.

Not all critics who use New Historicism feel that it provides a complete analysis of the work. An example that illustrates this view of New Historicism is Kim's (2002) dissertation that uses New Historicism to look at works of Adorno, Wordsworth, and Beethoven. He makes the point that New Historicists look not at the beliefs of the author but of the culture and times that influence the beliefs of the author (p. 1). Kim does not

accept that the creators of these great works are solely influenced by their culture. He uses his dissertation to defend and recover the good intention of the authors. Rather than the works being an influence of just the culture, Kim argues that the authors have and express their own beliefs and are not solely overcome by presiding beliefs of their time.

Understanding these applications, I used the lens of New Historicism to reread the John Turnipseed articles to look for references to the historic factors of interest in the analysis: education and portrayal of the lives of females. In cases where these factors were mentioned in the Turnipseed series, I made note of them. Some columns merely mentioned these historic factors while others devoted their entire space to the subject.

Specifically, I looked for certain words or ideas to determine if the column addressed one of the factors. When reading for references to education, I looked for words such as education, school, and college as well as academic subject names such as arithmetic and geography. I also searched for mention of media terms associated with diffusing education, such as books, bulletins, newspaper, editor, and almanac. Additionally, I considered radio as an educational term because it was an influential new medium for disseminating information, knowledge, and culture in the 1920s.

For the historic factor addressing lives of females, I looked for any noun or pronoun that suggested a female character in that column. Specifically, I looked for words such as woman, wife, girlfriend, female, aunt, she, and her. Upon finding these references to education and the lives of females, I added them to my notes.

I identified the Turnipseed columns that included references to education and the lives of females. Once they were identified, I added them to Table 3.2 and included a summary of the column references to the historical factors. Finding this information and

including it in the charts, allows for the historical factors to be more easily found for the analysis. Results of procedures to identify the historic factors of education and the lives of females are provided in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Historic Factors of Education and Lives of Females References in 1926 John Turnipseed Columns, *Indiana Prairie Farmer* magazine

Date of Publication	References to Education in 1926 John Turnipseed Columns
January 2	Turnipseed signed-up for a correspondence school and received a set of books. Paid $200 for them and was supposed to get $10,000 worth of knowledge. Now all the books are being used to hold up the baby, so Turnipseed doesn't have to buy a highchair.
January 16	Uncle Si believes the problem with the current way of life is that everyone knows too much. There are too many people guessing what the weather is going to be and predicting the crops. George Washington did not need to know this information, and he was a founder of the U.S. Uncle Si believes the government knows too much. Instead of reading the Almanac, farmers get their information from places like the Weather Bureau. Uncle Si also discusses life without the radio.
January 30	Hank makes the comment that Congress is spending too much money on educating farmers about growing crops, and they are getting too high of results. He would also like the Turnipseed columns to be replaced with something more useful.
February 13	Another column about a correspondence course. Hank purchases one on improving his personality.

Table 3.2 Continued

March 6	County superintendent asks Turnipseed if he will send his son to college. Turnipseed does not see the benefit of education, especially if it does not teach you to get along with your wife. According to Turnipseed, it does not matter how much you know if you cannot get along with others.
May 1	Turnipseed is trying to get reelected to the school board. Uncle Si believes there is too much education and that is why no one wants to work. He also does not want to buy new school supplies so the taxes do not increase.
May 15	Turnipseed is trying to discover if radio is useful to farmers. He says he spends too much time listening to the radio rather than working. It also provides him with corn prices, but they change so much that it just confuses him.
May 23	The county agent is after Turnipseed to keep financial books on his farm, but Turnipseed has no use for it and sees it as a waste of time. When he finally does, the other farmers make fun of him and call him a "book farmer."
June 19	Agricultural bulletins tell how much it costs to produce pork in 1921, and Turnipseed does not understand why this is important.
July 3	There are always political speeches on the radio.
October 23	Turnipseed listened to the radio to hear when to pick corn and then it turned to political programing.
November 6	Johnny debates about how arithmetic is not helpful, but geography teaches people everything they need to know.

Table 3.2 Continued

Date of Publication	References to Lives of Females in 1926 John Turnipseed Columns
January 2	Wife makes Turnipseed go outside to spit since he is supposed to quit chewing. They fight, and she says that it is no wonder their kids misbehave with the relatives on the father's side. Also, if Turnipseed is short on money at the first of the year, then it is his wife's fault.
January 9	Wife tells Turnipseed in her "loving way" to be quiet and go to sleep when he asks what was in her mince pie.
February 13	Hank's wife comes out to hear what the "latest scandal" is. She does not seem to approve of the foolish way her husband is spending their money. Even Turnipseed thinks Hank's wife should be in charge of the finances.
February 27	Wife upset about Turnipseed smoking a pipe. She agrees he is setting a bad example for his readers. He gets ashes on her best rug. Turnipseed says he has to smoke because his wife nags him so much. When he and his wife fight, they just go to different areas and leave each other alone. "A woman can't expect her husband to be perfect." If he's half perfect, then he's better than most.
March 13	Turnipseed gives the advice to never ask what your wife is pouting about, but instead just say sorry. Do not listen to relationship advice from etiquette books. Girls were not going out with Turnipseed because he was listening to the advice from the books. One girl did not want to talk about the elevator man but would rather gossip about another couple's engagement.

Table 3.2 Continued

March 20	Poem about women wanting everything they see. Turnipseed tried to get his wife a gift, but she was suspicious of him. She starts crying later because of a magazine article that indicates men cheat on their wives with flappers and if husbands start performing nice gestures, then it means they are not being loyal.
March 27	Aunt Em tries to cure Turnipseed and Johnny of their ailments, but the treatment makes them feel worse. Turnipseed's wife does not want them to say anything because she wants to remain in Aunt Em's will.
April 3	Turnipseed gets more advice on women even though he no longer wants it. Most of the advice is from unmarried men. One letter says Turnipseed needs to dress nicer, but his wife says what he wears is not important.
April 17	Wife hits Turnipseed over the head with a shoe to wake him up to see why the burglar system in the henhouse is going off. She is not letting Turnipseed do more with chicken thieving.
May 1	Wife unhappy that Turnipseed mentions the looks of the teacher.
May 23	Turnipseed cannot mention it is a nice day without his wife starting an argument.
July 17	Turnipseed used to love his wife for her eyes but now he loves her for her pancakes. It is better to have a cook than a pretty wife.
August 21	The druggist wants advice for his wife's paper on French debt. Turnipseed says the best way for women to improve is by growing their hair longer and covering their knees. The druggist says that females are wanting to improve their minds.
August 28	Wife complaining that Turnipseed sleeps and snores in church, but Turnipseed says he must not snore because she has never mentioned it prior to this.

Table 3.2 Continued

September 18	Turnipseed does not want his wife to take praying too far. Also, his wife is skeptical of river water because you do not know where it has been.
September 25	Turnipseed's wife wants to move to town because she is tired of working too hard.
October 30	Turnipseed's wife was complaining about a heavy bed that was hard to move and clean around, so Turnipseed sold it only to get in trouble form his wife because it was an antique. When his wife started complaining, he just quit listening.
December 4	Turnipseed's wife does not know company is coming. John kills the chicken while his wife cooks.
December 18	Turnipseed gets a letter about marrying off bachelors.

The specific Turnipseed columns and references reported in Table 3.2 form the basis for the current analysis. The next step of my analysis involved a rereading of columns and identification of evidence to support claims I would later form.

As I reread the Turnipseed columns, I began to form themes and claims from recurring patterns in the columns. I looked for repeated and similar words and ideas that could produce evident generalizations. As I studied the generalizations, I was able to produce claims for an argument about how the Turnipseed columns showcase what 1926 culture "said" about education and the lives of females. When analyzing, simply making a claim is not sufficient. Thus, I needed evidence to support the claims I was making. The evidence for these claims came from the John Turnipseed columns. I was able to make claims only because the Turnipseed columns provided evidence to support the claims.

As I analyzed the Turnipseed columns in this manner, I reflected on the claims through the lens of New Historicism. This meant that the claims I made were all focused

on how 1926 society had influenced the Turnipseed columns. However, a key aspect of the New Historicist literary perspective further specifies that I analyze how today's society affects my analysis of the text. Through this process, I was able to analyze the John Turnipseed series through the lens of New Historicism to understand the 1926 view of education and the lives of females while considering the impact of the present day society on me as the analyst and critic.

The analysis of New Historicism is a two-part process. First, New Historicism provides a methodology for focusing analysis on the culture of the content being analyzed. In the current analysis, the culture is 1926 America. New Historicism provided the lens that allows the Turnipseed columns to be studied in a way that assumes the text is a reflection of 1926 American culture. Instead of focusing on the author's beliefs or influences, New Historicism provides a focus solely on how the culture influences the text. Not only does the text represent the culture, but the culture has an influence on the text.

The second component of New Historicism specifies that the critic must consider the current-day society in which he or she is immersed. In the current analysis, I am the critic living in the year 2015. The nearly ninety years of history that has transpired between the years of 1926 and 2015 has influenced modern views on history. If history were different or if I were living in a different culture, then my analysis of the John Turnipseed series would be different. New Historicism recognizes that merely looking at the culture of the period is not enough to fully understand the analysis of the piece. When I analyzed the Turnipseed columns, I essentially had to analyze my own analysis to

understand where and how my culture, which has ninety more years of history to shape it, has influenced the analysis.

An example to help understand this concept is the study of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice.* One of the discussions that often surrounds this play is whether its content suggests that Shakespeare was anti-Semitic. This is a reasonable claim based on the characterization of Shylock, a Jewish character in the play. To analyze further, the critic must realize that anti-Semitism was not a social or political concern during Shakespeare's life. Today's critic lives in a post-Holocaustic world where ideas of anti-Semitism are prevalent, but Shakespeare's culture did not have the same history to influence it (Rogers, 2005; CliffsNotes, 2014).

This two-step methodology was used to analyze the Turnipseed columns in the current analysis. I first read the Turnipseed columns identified as having components of the historic factors addressed in this study: education and the lives of females. As I read the columns, I looked for recurring words and themes that became generalizations that I generated into claims about how the culture of 1926 had affected the text in terms of education and the lives of females. Next, I provided evidence from the Turnipseed columns to support these claims.

I then transitioned to the second component of New Historicism. In order to understand how today's culture has influenced my analysis, I attempted to read my analysis in the mindset of someone who lived during 1926. Although it is impossible to fully understand living in 1926 without actually having done it, I tried to think as someone in that time period and analyzed my own analysis as someone who lived in that era. Once I had completed the first component of New Historicism, I returned to it, and

essentially re-analyzed this analysis. I analyzed my claims looking for any ideas that were more modern. When I found a concept or idea rooted in 2015 or between the years of 1926 and 2015, I provided an explanation of how modern culture had influenced the analysis. Essentially, the second part of New Historicism provides a disclaimer that although today's critics can use New Historicism to analyze the culture of 1926, our own culture influences our analysis of the past in an impactful manner.

3.5 Research Statement on Methodology

New Historicism is a literary theory with no strict methodology, which makes reproducing a specific study challenging. Gallagher and Greenblatt (2002) acknowledge that "New Historicism is not a repeatable methodology…" (p. 19), and the very essence of the theory makes an exact reproduction nearly impossible because one primary component of New Historicism is considering the critic's analysis of the text at that specific point in history (Brizee, Tompkins, Chernouski, & Boyle, 2012). Because the researcher has so much power in the analysis and because every individual is different, New Historicism will be carried out differently and may well produce different findings each time it is used in an analysis.

As the researcher, I was analyzing the John Turnipseed columns from a female's perspective in the year 2015. I have an agricultural background and have formally studied both English and education in my undergraduate degree program. These characteristics all hold implications for how I analyzed the text. Another researcher with different traits or cultural background would likely analyze the text differently. Even someone with similar traits to me might produce different results. This is not to imply that one analysis

is better than another. A defining characteristic of New Historicism is its allowance for the critic's point in history to affect the analysis.

The department where I performed my research is heavily based in the social-scientific writing format, so I took it upon myself to understand the literary process. This required a number of steps to ensure rigor. I talked to experts who were familiar with New Historicist analysis such as my former undergraduate English advisor as well as a current professor of communication. Both had experience using New Historicism with varied texts. I also visited the Purdue University Writing Center to discuss New Historicism with graduate students who have applied it in their own research. My research and readings cited in my literature review (Chapter 2) also helped me gain a deeper understanding of New Historicism as did my academic background in English. To learn more about the *Indiana Prairie Farmer*, I not only analyzed copies from the 1920s in the Purdue University Library, but I also visited the Indiana State Library and the Indiana Historical Society in Indianapolis to learn more about the magazine and rural 1920s America. Current editor of the *Indiana Prairie Farmer* Tom Bechman also met with me to discuss the magazine. These steps enabled me to learn as much as I could about New Historicism and the Turnipseed columns to ensure the rigor of my research.

3.6 Limitations

One of the limitations of this study is the vague nature of New Historicism. No particular methodology is associated with the use of New Historicism (Gallagher and Greenblatt, 2002, p. 19). The lack of accepted conventions governing the use of New Historicism created challenges when applying the literary theory to this study.

Conversely, the lack of guidelines creates freedom for New Historicism to be applied to a wider range of subject areas. Some philosophical adjustments are needed for social scientists not familiar with this analytical approach.

In addition, the rare nature of documents being studied in the current analysis presented another limitation. The Turnipseed columns are not well-known to current readers. The *Indiana Prairie Farmer* magazine itself has limited recognition outside of its agricultural circle. Papers from 1926 were difficult to find and could be accessed only in archival libraries. Since the magazines were almost 90 years old, many were in fragile condition. Because they are not available online, they could be researched only manually.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

Prior descriptions of the *Indiana Prairie Farmer* and John Turnipseed column, as well as the culture of 1920s America, have provided a historical background that supports and strengthens the New Historicist analysis of this document. Chapter 4 provides a description of the results of the New Historicist analysis described in Chapter 3. The evidence, in the form of quotations and summaries from the John Turnipseed columns, is presented in this chapter. The presented evidence supports the claims for both the historical factors of education and the lives of females. Once the evidence is presented, the claims are formed and followed by a discussion.

The Turnipseed column is a fictional first-person narration told from the point of view of John Turnipseed. The column follows Turnipseed on his daily adventures in rural 1920s America. Turnipseed is a likeable character with whom the readers can identify. His stories and journeys are pertinent and relatable to the people of that era, and the humor that saturates the column is often founded upon Turnipseed making fun of himself. The other characters who populate Turnipseed's world also provide views of 1920s rural America. For example, Uncle Si represents the older generation of farmers while the Elevator Man often represents opposition to the farmer's views. The representations of 1920s rural America in the Turnipseed columns are an essential element of New

Historicism, which states that a text reflects the culture of its time (Brizee, Tompkins, Chernouski, & Boyle, 2012, It's All Relative section, para. 3). The Turnipseed columns reflect the rural American subculture of the 1920s rather than the overarching American culture. In the 1920s, rural America was more prominent than today. In present day society, agriculture and rural America are only a sliver of the overall culture, but in the 1920s, it was a more prominent culture that included a larger portion of the population.

Using New Historicism, the analysis focuses on how the text informs the critic of the culture of that era. It is important to note that although Editor Clifford Gregory is the author of the Turnipseed columns, New Historicism does not focus on the role of the author because "though identified with a single author, texts are generated by a community (Hens-Piazza, 2002, p.43). For the critic, it is essential to remember that the analysis focuses on what the text can tell us about the culture. Specifically, the following analysis will focus on what the text of the John Turnipseed columns can tell the critic about the culture of 1920s rural America in terms of the two historical factors identified as the focus for this study: education and the lives of females.

4.2 Education Claim 1

To identify claims pertaining to education, I read and analyzed the Turnipseed columns with words such as education, school, bulletin, newspaper, editor, almanac, radio, book, and college as well as academic subject names such as arithmetic and geography that were identified in Chapter 3 as indicators of education. In total, 12 columns were identified as having references to education. These 12 columns provided the evidence needed to make the claims pertaining to education.

Turnipseed begins the year of 1926 talking about education in his January 2 column. Turnipseed writes that he registered for a correspondence school course. According to Turnipseed, "I had to pay $200 and if I'd read 'em I'd been worth $10,000 a year by now, accordin' to the agent, but how I'd ever collect it he didn't say. Anyway, them books is good for the baby to set on and saved me buyin' a high chair" ("About New Year's Resolutions"). Turnipseed believes he is actually going to be able to make that money from the books and does not understand how he is supposed to collect the $10,000. His statement implies that he does not understand the concept that education can make an individual richer. Turnipseed shows that he has no use for the original intention of the books when he decides to use them as a booster seat for the baby instead of reading them.

In the same article, Turnipseed discusses how he does not have time to keep record books. Turnipseed's philosophy is that "some folks keep books all year and stay up half the night to add 'em up, and when the year's over they don't know no more'n I do" ("About New Year's Resolutions"). Again, Turnipseed has no interest in anything dealing with books. He is a farmer and does not have time for record keeping. Reflective of 1920s rural America, the role of the farmer during this period was not one who kept record books about his farm. Turnipseed has never kept records in the past and has not had a problem, so he does not understand why he needs to start recording his transactions. Turnipseed does contemplate writing an article for the *Prairie Farmer* on keeping books although he "…don't know if the editor will print it or not, but it will be better'n lots of his editorials, because it will be based on experience and not on what he thinks" ("About New Year's Resolutions").

Turnipseed discusses correspondence courses again on February 13, but once more they are portrayed as having little use in a culture preferring common sense. Turnipseed's friend, Hank Wilson, spends money on a correspondence course to teach about developing one's personality. Turnipseed tells Wilson "…you signed up for a correspondence course on how to develop your personality, though you've got more personality than brains now" ("A Hard Times Story"). Not only does Wilson not have the money to spend, but it is also a course that he does not need.

In the March 6 article, Turnipseed spends the entire column talking to the county superintendent about the importance of education. The superintendent wants to know if Turnipseed is intending to send his son, Johnny, to college when he comes of age. Turnipseed says he believes in education although he does not know why. For Turnipseed, obtaining a college education is not important because college does not teach useful material. While his son would probably learn a number of subjects such as "…the Greek alphabet and higher mathematics and all about atoms and germs and evolution" ("Getting Along With Folks"), college would not help his son understand how to get along with others. Specifically, Turnipseed wonders, "What's the use of a college education if it don't teach you how to git along with your wife?" ("Getting Along With Folks"). The subjects Turnipseed mention all lack any common sense for the farming world and do not hold the relevance that getting along with other people does. Turnipseed mentions a man in town who has a college education, but he could not get along with this wife, so she left him. Turnipseed feels that once people get an education they feel superior to others which keeps them from making friends. Turnipseed says, "If I was runnin' a college I'd educate their heart first and then if I had time I'd put a few facts

into their head, not that it matters so much at that" ("Getting Along With Folks"). Since a college education does not provide the knowledge of how to get along with others, Turnipseed sees little need for it ("Getting Along With Folks"). In a culture where common sense prevails, getting along with others is more important than the subjects taught in school because dealing with others is an everyday occurrence that affects everyone.

John Turnipseed is again faced with the idea of keeping books for his farm records in the May 23 column. The county agent proposes that John begins to keep records of purchases and sales, but Turnipseed sees no reason to keep books on his farm. According to Turnipseed, " I spend half my time tryin' to find out what the feller meant that writes the government bulletins, and if I had to keep books too I wouldn't never get no work done" ("John Is No Bookkeeper"). Eventually, Tunrnipseed agrees to try keeping books. This is met with his neighbors calling him names such as "book farmer." John tries to keep track of the numbers for his farm, but he has difficulty, so he decides that he is meant to be a farmer and not a bookkeeper. The book that was meant for keeping his farm records becomes his son's "…scrap book to paste the pictures of Slim and Spud in" (John Is No Bookkeeper). Again, Turnipseed does not perceive a need for record keeping because it does not make sense to him. According to Turnipseed, "I ain't no bookkeeper, I'm a farmer, and I'd rather quit the farm bureau than to have to put everything I do down in a book" ("John Is No Bookkeeper"). For many during this time, common sense and education are two mutually exclusive groups, and for those living in rural areas, common sense is more relevant to their way of life. They associate farming and agriculture with common sense more than the formal education connected with

schools. Record keeping is not something that falls into the realm of common sense for Turnipseed ("John is No Bookkeeper").

While Turnipseed does not perceive formal education as useful, there are some particular parts of education that he specifically targets as being unneeded because of their lack of common sense. In the June 19 column, Turnipseed has trouble understanding why bulletins are published with how much it costs to produce pork from 1921. To Turnipseed, this is old information that is no longer relevant or useful because "I ain't a-goin' to produce no more hogs in 1921" ("John Discusses Bulletins"). He believes "if there's anything that's against the rules of the scientist's union, it's gettin' out information while it's fresh" ("John Discusses Bulletins"). Additionally, in the November 6 column, Turnipseed does not see the value of arithmetic when there are more useful subjects, such as geography. For Turnipseed, geography has many more practical uses and teaches everything one needs to know. Turnipseed argues that "we'd be awful ignorant if it wasn't for geography. We wouldn't know Schenectady from Senegambia, nor the difference between Terra Cotta and Terra del Fuego" ("Johnny Loses the Debate"). Arithmetic is not as useful, so it is not as important to him. If Turnipseed does not see the direct implications of something, then there is little need for it in a culture ruled by common sense. Turnipseed does not see the immediate benefits of the pork prices in 1921 nor of arithmetic because they are not topics that Turnipseed equates with common sense.

In terms of the historical factor of education, the John Turnipseed columns provide evidence for the claim that the mentality of 1920s rural America perceived little or no need for education. Turnipseed and the other characters within the column do not

find it useful to their everyday life. In the routine of a typical day, there is no room for education. Rather, common sense is valued more highly, and education never equates to common sense for the characters in the Turnipseed columns. According to Merriam-Webster (n.d.), common sense is defined as "sound and prudent judgment based on a simple perception of the situation or facts" (Full Definition of Common Sense section). For Turnipseed and his readers, education is not as simplistic and practical as what the definition of "common sense" implies. Budd (1991c) notes that "many of John's devoted readers like him because he has a head full of common sense" (p. 120). Additionally, the *Prairie Farmer* platform from 1922 discussed in Chapter 2 never uses the words "education" or "information," but it does use the wording "common sense." This mention again emphasizes common sense over education during the 1920s in rural America (Erb, 1991, p. 33).

This view on education is a direct reflection of the 1920s rural culture where eighth grade was the highest level of education most adults obtained (National Center for Educational Statistics, n.d.). Most people living in rural areas had always been farmers. They had managed the farm thus far and saw no reason to change. Common sense is needed more on the farm than the education being taught in schools. The Turnipseed columns reflect this 1920s mentality that common sense prevails over education in rural America. For those living in this era, education was not a priority. Farmers needed their children for the labor on the farm, and many farmers did not see a need for education that was not rooted in common sense.

Farmers had survived for generations in rural areas and saw no need to adjust what they were doing. During the 1920s, farmers were experiencing difficult financial

times because of the lack of demand that resulted after the prosperous period of World War I. In order to keep the farm running, farmers needed workers. With the financial depression that farmers were already experiencing in the 1920s, they could not afford hired help. Thus, their children and family members would have been the only available help. The need for workers on the farm would have shortened many educational careers.

4.3 Critic's Discussion of Education Claim 1

As a critic in today's society, it is important to consider the modern perception of education. The 2015 view of education is immensely different from that in 1926. Today rather than most U.S. citizens having only an eighth-grade education, 2009 reports indicate that 85 percent of adults over the age of 25 have a high school diploma or its equivalent (Ryan & Siebens, 2012). This is three times the number of people who had a high school diploma in the 1940s when the U.S. Census Bureau initially began to collect data for educational attainment (Ryan & Siebens, 2012). It can be assumed the numbers were even lower in the 1920s.

Education occupies a prominent role in modern society. The concept of quitting school at the eighth grade to work on the family farm is a foreign concept to many people in today's culture. The fact that the U.S. Census Bureau began to collect educational attainment data in 1940 was a signal that education was starting to play a more serious role in society. More people not only began to obtain a basic education, but also began to pursue an advanced education.

The claim that the Turnipseed columns portray education as unneeded would be hard for people in today's society to understand. Education is valued by many in the

United States and is seen as one of the primary ways to better oneself. This is supported by the numbers found by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2009 that over 28 percent of adults over the age of twenty-five report having a Bachelor's degree or higher. This is five times more than what was reported in 1940 (Ryan & Siebens, 2012).

The perception of education is very different today than it was in 1926. The concept that education is not needed is not as prominent with adults today. Education has become the gateway to careers and professional futures. The days of the majority of people farming are gone. In 2015, it is hard to understand that education was not promoted to students as they reached high school because many students never even reached high school. Therefore, spending money on further education was rare. Today, education is a valued part of our society, but in 1926 it was an unneeded commodity that did not fit into their lifestyle.

4.4 Education Claim 2

The 12 columns with indicators to education provide enough evidence for another claim. In the January 16 column, Turnipseed is talking to Uncle Si, one of his elders, about the current problems of the day. Uncle Si believes "the trouble with us farmers now… is that we know too many things that ain't so, like what the weather is goin' to be day after tomorrow and how big the corn crop is" ("Too Many Guessers"). Uncle Si supports his argument using George Washington as an example. In Uncle Si's opinion, "George Washington didn't have no weather bureau to tell him what the weather was goin' to be like at Valley Forge…He just depended on the almanac and that's why we've got a Fourth of July now" ("Too Many Guessers"). Uncle Si believes that whatever is

good enough for George Washington should be good enough for people in 1926. According to Uncle Si, the government has too much control and is sharing unnecessary information with the public. He is even upset that "we can't even go to town for our mail no more and sit around the depot stove and swap yarns" ("Too Many Guessers") due to rural free delivery. Ultimately, knowing more has created changes that many people, especially the older generation, are reluctant to accept. If a concept has worked in the past, why alter it?

On January 30, Turnipseed's acquaintance, Hank Wilson, also supports the belief that too much education is a problem. For Wilson, Congress is spending too much money on educating the weather bureau without getting results, and Congress is also spending too much money educating farmers and getting too many results. Specifically, Wilson believes "the trouble is that congress spends a lot of money on the weather bureau and don't get no results. Then it spends a lot on educatin' farmers to grow bigger crops and gits too much results" ("All About the Surplus Problem"). Too much education for famers means they produce a surplus of crops, which drives down prices. Thus, without education, there would be no surplus of crops, which would mean farmers would receive a higher price for their crops ("All About the Surplus Problem"). According to this perspective, knowing more has brought about unhelpful changes for farmers that have not made them more successful.

Uncle Si again complains about the excess of education in Turnipseed's May 1 column. According to Uncle Si, "…we've got too blamed much education and that's why the young folks don't want to work no more" ("John is Off the School Board"). Young adults in the more-urban areas were quick to embrace the changes transforming America.

New clothing and hair styles, automobiles, and Jazz music all perpetuated a faster lifestyle that was appealing to the younger generation. In rural areas, where change did not happen as quickly, some were less willing to accept change or to accept any new information that would accelerate it. To Uncle Si, the young people who obtained an education and were unwilling to work were probably those from the city who were busy embracing the change.

In his May 15 column, Turnipseed describes radio as a distraction. The radio is a new device to the 1920s that can transmit information, but for Turnipseed having the ability to listen to programming distracts him from working. He stays awake late listening to the radio and is too tired to work the next day. According to Turnipseed, "I sit up so late listenin' to opera stars and jazz bands that I can't do no work the next day" ("Farming By Radio"). Additionally, Wilson says that constantly knowing crop price and weather developments forces him to change his mind about how he will spend his day, and this has led to a great deal of problems on the farm. Without radio, Turnipseed and Wilson would be less educated, but they would not be distracted from their work ("Farming By Radio").

The Turnipseed columns perpetuate the idea that too much education is a problem. Turnipseed and the characters around him support the idea that having too much education is not only detrimental to individuals but could also harm society. This concept likely arose from the conflicting societal views of those from rural and urban areas in the 1920s. While urban areas were plunging into the change for which the decade was famous, rural areas continued to cling to a way of life that was quickly becoming obsolete. While the 1920s were a time of change, not everyone embraced the impending

change. One of the best ways to prevent this transformation was by staying uninformed and uneducated about the changes that were occurring (Chen, 2015).

The perception that knowing too much or being too educated is a problem that reflects the culture of the 1920s. Part of the reluctance to change for those in rural areas was simply a lack of information being disseminated to rural areas. In the cities, it was much easier for ideas to spread. Diffusion of the ideas were slower and uneven in remote rural areas, which did not experience the rapid changes of the metropolitan areas (Rogers, 1995). Newspapers and radio could carry ideas to the countryside, but for those living in rural America the changes did not occur as quickly. In fact for those living outside of the cities, some of the changes were appalling and needed to be challenged. Thus, while urban America was embracing a world of transition and change, rural America was fighting to preserve the traditional lifestyle. One of the most prominent examples of embracing this conservative lifestyle during the 1920s was prohibition. Although prohibition was a law that affected the entire country, the cities did not fully embrace it. Speakeasies in the cities still served alcohol. It was the more conservative rural America that wanted the ban on alcohol (History.com staff, 2010).

The push for change in the cities and the reluctance to accept it by rural America helped define the era. One way that change is initiated is through the spreading of knowledge. As more and more of the changing ways from the city are diffused to rural areas, the better chance for change in rural areas. Thus, for conservative rural Americans of the 1920s, knowing too much could easily be perceived as a problem because it could initiate unwanted change (Chen, 2015; Edgar, 2012).

Ideas within the Turnipseed columns, such as knowing too much causes an unwillingness to work, are frightening concepts to a society unwilling to change. The American dream concludes that this country was built on hard work, and until the 1920s the United States was a predominantly farming nation. The change of lifestyle occurring in cities had to be seen as threatening to a conservative rural society. One of the best ways to protect rural America from the change that was occurring in the cities was by preventing them from learning about the change or allowing them to grow and change through education.

The major theme that too much knowledge is a problem is prevalent in the Turnipseed columns. Rural America, which was the target audience for the *Prairie Farmer* magazines, represented the more conservative America that did not approve of the transformation taking over the cities. For them, change and the knowledge that could promote change was a problem.

There are times where the reader can observe Turnipseed contradicting himself. He often appears confident in not wanting to avail himself of the educational possibilities presented to him. At other times, he does try new educational endeavors, which are often met with mixed results. An example is when Turnipseed purchases a correspondence course, but rather than reading the books, he uses them for a highchair ("About New Year's Resolutions"). In another instance, he discusses sending Johnny to college. Turnipseed seems adamant that his son has no use for college, but by the end of the argument, he says he will probably enroll Johnny ("Getting Along with Folks"). Throughout his references to education, Turnipseed is constantly wavering between embracing education and maintaining his distance. His times of contradiction suggest that

he is a character caught in the change of the 1920s. Turnipseeds opinion on education has by no means drastically changed, but he does start to give consideration to new educational ideas. The 1920s were an era of change, and Turnipseed's moments of contradiction show the change that is beginning in his character.

Because most of Turnipseed's neighbors do not strongly support education, Turnipseed is likely to conform to this view rather than risk losing rapport with the other farmers. An example is when Turnipseed has no desire to keep records for his farm, but he eventually tries it. He quits when the other farmers begin to make fun of him ("John Is No Bookkeeper"). Living in a culture that is unwilling to change makes it difficult for individuals to go against the predominant opinion.

4.5 Critic's Discussion of Education Claim 2

For the critic living in 2015, the world is full of constant change. Technology has transformed the way most people live in the United States. Today information can be diffused almost instantly. While there are still lifestyle differences between those living in rural and urban areas, most differences are not due to the inability to receive the information. We are connected today in a way that never existed in prior years. People from all over the world can communicate with each other via the telephone or through the Internet, and there are numerous ways to learn about other lifestyles. Television shows, YouTube videos, social media, and webpages all offer glimpses into the lifestyles of different people. In 1926, the only life you knew was the one you were living. To know more was threatening to many individuals in the 1920s. In 2015, it is hard to understand

an era where not only are people unable to connect across the country, but they also have no desire to do so.

In today's society, information is easily accessible and available at a moment's notice. If someone wants to know a piece of information, all it takes is searching online for it on a smart phone. Today, people carry all the information they could ever imagine in their pockets. Even if someone does not have a smartphone, all it takes to learn something is finding a computer or tablet that has internet access. No longer do we live in a society that is afraid to learn, but rather we live in a society that revolves around and thrives upon the technology that connects and provides us with new information.

Today's critic needs to remember the difference that existed amongst the dispersion of information between the 1920s and present day. The technology that exists today allows information to be available immediately. With the limited methods of communication in the 1920s, there came the cultural divide between the progressive urban areas and the rural areas that resisted change (Digital History, 2014). Information is more easily dispersed to these areas in present day, so it is important for today's critic to remember that there was more of a resistance to change in rural areas, and it was harder for them to receive information (Rogers, 1995).

4.6 Lives of Females Claim

Similar to education, words such as woman, wife, girlfriend, female, aunt, she, and her were used to identify any column that had an indicator referencing a female in the Turnipseed columns. A total of 19 columns mentioned females, and these columns were used to provide supporting evidence for the lives of females claim.

The evidence begins with Turnipseed's column on January 2 where he discusses his New Year's resolution from the previous year: to quit smoking and chewing. According to Turnipseed, "…my wife made me go outdoors to spit and I froze my nose" ("About New Year's Resolutions"). Additionally, Turnipseed says his wife "…starts tellin' me that it's no wonder she can't do nothin' with Johnny, considerin' what his relatives is like on his pa's side…" ("About New Year's Resolutions").

In terms of business matters, Turnipseed does not understand why his wife wants him to keep records of their income and expenses. He always counts his money at the first of the year. If they are short on money at the beginning of the year compared to the previous year, then he knows it was his wife's fault. Turnipseed's exact theory is "if I have more next New Year's I'll know I had a prosperous year, and if I have less it's my wife's fault" ("About New Year's Resolutions"). In the very first entry of the year, Turnipseed's wife is making his life more difficult. Aside from nagging him about the undesirable qualities of his relatives, she is also making him go outside to spit and wants him to keep records. If Turnipseed was left to his own devices, he would not choose to pursue these actions. Thus, Turnipseed's wife is making his life more difficult than if he would be able to make his own decisions about his actions.

Turnipseed also portrays his wife as having a short temper and unable to take criticism. When Turnipseed questions his wife's cooking on January 9, she does not take it well. Turnipseed wakes up in the middle of the night not feeling well and questions his wife about her mincemeat pie. According to Turnipseed, his wife responds to "shut up and go to sleep…in her lovin' way" ("John Loses His Appendix"). Not only does Turnipseed's wife appear annoyed, but she also shows no concern for her husband.

Turnipseed's wife is not the only female who is treated as a stock character. On February 13, Turnipseed visits his friend, Hank, and his wife. Hank's wife is portrayed as a nosey character as she had "come out to see what the latest scandal was" ("A Hard Times Story"). In spite of this, Turnipseed still believes that Hank's wife should be in charge of the money because Hank is so willing to spend it on unreliable schemes. Although Turnipseed is willing to give a female control of the finances, it is only because her husband has proved himself to be undependable ("A Hard Times Story").

On February 27, Turnipseed's wife tells him that he should quit smoking his pipe because he is setting a bad example for his readers and getting ashes on her rugs. Turnipseed justifies smoking a pipe "because it helps keep me calm when my wife is naggin' at me" ("Following A Good Example"). This upsets Turnipseed's wife, so she walks away, and Turnipseed comments that by staying away from each other they are able to avoid many fights. Turnipseed and his wife continue to quarrel for the remainder of the night, and Turnipseed decides that the problem is "a woman can't expect her husband to be perfect. If he's half perfect he's better than most of 'em" ("Following A Good Example"). Turnipseed does not seem to consider that the same is true for men's consideration of women.

Turnipseed gets advice on how to deal with females from one of his readers on March 13. One reader suggests "…never ask what your wife is pouting about: just say, Honey, I'm sorry" ("Expert Advice Not So Good"). Turnipseed does not believe in seeking relationship advice from etiquette books because he had a bad experiences with females when he tried to follow the guidelines established within etiquette books. On one date Turnipseed recalls that when he tried to talk about his farming, all the girl wanted to

do was gossip about another couple's engagement. Again, Turnipseed's column portrays that women are interested only in gossiping about other's lives and do not care about more serious matters ("Expert Advice Not So Good").

The advice continues the next week on March 20 when a reader provides the following poem "Man wants but little here below / And is not hard to please, / But woman, bless her little heart, / Wants everything she sees" ("Advice Is No Good"). Men seem to believe that women want everything, but when Turnipseed takes the advice of a woman who writes for the *Prairie Farmer*, he learns "the way to get along with your wife is to feed her bait like you did before you married her and not do like the fisherman, quit feeding his fish bait after he catches them" ("Advice Is No Good"). With this advice, Turnipseed buys his wife a gift and becomes more useful around the house. Turnipseed's wife becomes upset at this because of a recent magazine article "…that said with all these flappers around women had to watch their husbands real close, and if they started bein' good and kind all of a sudden that was sure proof that they had been up to something" ("Advice Is No Good"). Not only does this revelation make Turnipseed's wife seem paranoid, it also introduces the evil influence of the flapper. Although flappers are commonly equated with the 1920s, it was a small minority of females who fully embraced the flapper mentality. Very few of these women would have lived in rural areas. Thus, the fear from Turnipseed's wife comes more from imagination than reality.

Another female that appears in the Turnipseed series is Turnipseed's Aunt Em in the March 27 column. According to Turnipseed, "Aunt Em was glad to see me, knowin' I was good for a couple of weeks' good board that wouldn't cost her nothin'" ("Aunt Em's Spring Fever Cure"). She is a character that Turnipseed is only interested in placating

because of her inheritance. Aunt Em insists on giving Turnipseed and his son a treatment for spring fever that consists of a mixture of Sulphur and molasses and is repulsive to both. Rather than tell Aunt Em the truth, Turnipseed and his son find a way to deceive Aunt Em into believing they are taking the cure. Turnipseed's son "…had the water bottle fixed inside his shirt so he could poor his medicine into it instead of into him" ("Aunt Em's Spring Fever Cure"). Turnipseed's wife does not sympathizes with them because she says, "I've been wantin' a new house for years, and my only chance to git it is outen Aunt Em's will" ("Aunt Em's Spring Fever Cure"). Thus, she tells Turnipseed to not complain about Aunt Em so there is still a chance to remain in her will ("Aunt Em's Spring Fever Cure").

Aunt Em is also not portrayed as a fully developed female character. She is yet another woman seen as a nuisance to Turnipseed's everyday life and is the typical older relative who is placated only in the hopes she will reward the Turnipseed family in the will. In addition, Turnipseed's wife is portrayed in an even less flattering manner. In this particular column, she not only has no sympathy for her husband and son, but is also willing to deceive Aunt Em in order to benefit from her will. Turnipseed's wife shows no compassion for Aunt Em, and only sees the new house she may gain upon the elderly woman's death.

By April 3, Turnipseed is still receiving advice on how to deal with his wife although he and his wife have been getting along recently. The men who have been writing to him, however, are all young and unmarried. One man suggested that he talk to other women to make his wife jealous while another suggested that he dress more nicely. Turnipseed says that his "wife says she loves me whether I am dressed up or not, so

everything is all right and I don't need no advice from anyone" ("John Gets More Advice"). The column provides one of the few examples of Turnipseed's wife being portrayed in a positive light although it does not last long.

On April 17, Turnipseed's wife wakes him by hitting him over the head with her shoe to let him know that the burglary system for the chicken thieves has been tripped. Chicken thievery was a serious problem during this period. Turnipseed's wife tells him, "you wouldn't wake up if a ton of brick fell on you" ("John Got His Chickens Back"). Additionally, she informs Turnipseed that she will no longer allow him to continue investigating the chicken thieves because his investigation has been so disruptive and unsuccessful. Turnipseed's "wife has got a lock on the chicken house now and she says if the editor wants any more chicken thief experience let him get it himself" ("John Got His Chickens Back"). Not only is Turnipseed's wife unhappy with his investigation into the chicken thieves, but in the May 1 column she is also upset that he finds their son's school teacher attractive. After Turnipseed gave a speech, "there was quite a lot of applause when I sat down, only my wife didn't clap none on account of what I said about the schoolma'am" ("John is Off the School Board"). Again, Turnipseed's wife is telling him what to do and making his life more complicated according to Turnipseed's standards. She also is again being portrayed as jealous when she learns about the school teacher.

Turnipseed talks to others about the struggles with his wife. When the county agent comes to visit in the May 23 column, he tells Turnipseed, "the trouble with you…is that you work too much and don't figger enough" ("John Is No Bookkeeper"). Turnipseed wonders if the county agent could tell his wife that he works too much so that she would stop nagging him as much. Later, in the same column, Turnipseed "…didn't

say nothin' on account of not wantin' to start no argument which is easy to do with a woman even if you're only talkin' about the weather" ("John Is No Bookkeeper"). While this is probably an exaggeration from Turnipseed, it shows how frequently he and his wife fight and the triviality of their quarrels.

Turnipseed offers some stereotypical advice for others on finding the right woman. In the July 17 column, Turnipseed tells Hank Wilson's son, "When I was young…I loved my wife for her blue eyes. Now I love her for her pancakes…you can live without [a sweet young thing] a blamed sight longer than you can live without three square meals a day" (When You Fall In Love"). According to Turnipseed, it is better to love a woman who can cook than to love one for her looks. Later Turnipseed decides, "A slice of ham that's cooked to a turn will look better to you than that cute little curl over your wife's left ear" ("When You Fall In Love").

In the August 21 column, Turnipseed tells the druggist to "…tell them women that the best way for them to improve themselves is to let their hair grow and cover up their knees…" ("All About the French Debt"). For Turnipseed, the new flapper-like styles for females have not improved women. The druggist disagrees with Turnipseed and says that women need to improve their minds. According to the druggist, he sells them "…enough stuff every week to make a Miss America out of the homeliest woman in town" ("All About the French Debt"). Turnipseed praises women's looks and cooking above all other qualities. These are stereotypical qualities that men often seek in females, and from the druggist's information most women comply with what the males want.

As the year progresses, Turnipseed continues to argue with his wife. On August 28, Turnipseed's wife tells him how embarrassed she was that he snored during church.

Turnipseed does not believe that he snores because he has never heard himself snore, and he tells his wife, “there ain’t none of my faults that you ain’t pointed out time and again, and you ain’t never said nothin’ about snorin’” (“Sleeping in Church”). She has never mentioned snoring before this, so he doubts that he actually snores.

Turnipseed also portrays his wife as being picky and wanting what is beyond her means. In the September 18 column, there is a flood, and Turnipseed says that, “the worst trouble I had was gettin’ in water for my wife. She’s got a prejudice agin river water on account of not knowin’ where it’s been” (“John Is All Wet”). Due to his wife’s beliefs, Turnipseed had to hunt all day for the water pump, “and then liked to have drowned tryin’ to dive down and hang the pail on the spout” (“John Is All Wet”). Then, on September 25, Turnipseed’s wife wants to move into town because she is tired of working so hard on the farm with little reward. She wants “to git away from floods and cornborers and short sellers…and not worry about the oatfield wahin’ away” (“John Tries Town Life”). Turnipseed agrees to try it, but he and his wife are unsuccessful living in the city, and Turnipseed’s “…wife ain’t said no more about movin’ to town” (“John Tries Town Life”).

Additionally, on October 30, Turnipseed decides to sell an old bed that his wife complains is too heavy to move, and they no longer use. When Turnipseed tells his wife that he sold the bed she was complaining about, she becomes upset because it was an antique and Turnipseed did not sell it for enough money. Turnipseed’s wife tells him, “John, you ain’t got no brains…That bed was an antique and I could of got fifty dollars for it just as easy as not” (“A Lesson In Antiques”). Turnipseed knew “she said a lot more, too, that I don’t remember on account I never listen when she gits a spell like that”

("A Lesson In Antiques"). Later, Turnipseed finds a man selling older merchandise and purchases some of it in the hopes of taking some antiques home to his wife to replace the bed. When Turnipseed arrives home with them, his wife is upset because he bought nothing but junk. Again, Turnipseed is left questioning how to understand women and says "…if the rest of you men folks can understand women you can do better than I can" ("A Lesson In Antiques").

On December 4, Turnipseed again shows how he and his wife fall into the more traditional gender roles. When company comes to Thanksgiving dinner unannounced, it is Turnipseed who kills the chicken and his wife who does all the cooking ("Company For Dinner"). When women stray from these gender roles, it upsets Turnipseed such as on December 18 when Turnipseed again complains about flappers and their choice of actions. When Turnipseed provides advice on marrying off bachelors, he feels that if men "chew tobacco and don't shave only once a week even the flappers might pass 'em up, especially if they ain't got a good farm apiece" ("Marrying Off the Bachelors"). Turnipseed does not have a high opinion of flappers as he is using them as the lowest possible female in the previous scenario. Again, flappers would not have been prominent in the rural America of the 1920s that was so unwilling to change, and Turnipseed obviously had a low opinion of them.

Turnipseed's portrayal of the historical factor of the lives of females within his column is the stereotypical depiction of females from the perspective of a man who has been married for a long time. Women become nagging characters who constantly complain about their husbands and are never satisfied with what they have. The husband is never correct, and the wife is never quiet (Talbot, 2003). Turnipseed's wife is very

much a stock character with her stereotypical traits and lack of dimension as a character. Her name, Martha, is never mentioned in the 1926 column, and she is the only recurring female in Turnipseed's family in 1926. This portrayal of females supports the claim that in the culture of 1926 it was not uncommon for the rural man to view women as a nagging force in their life meant to be more quarrelsome than pleasurable. Females in the 1920s were just beginning to be considered outside of the roles of wives and mothers (McDonnell, 2013), and the Turnipseed column reflects the idea that this has not fully reached the rural areas.

None of the female characters in Turnipseed are fully developed, and there are few female characters who have a prominent role in the column. These are cultural views from 1926 that are being portrayed through the Turnipseed articles. Women were just beginning to gain some of the same rights as males, so the notion of gender equality was much less developed than it is in 2015. Thus, portraying females as one-dimensional characters is not surprising considering that rights of females were just beginning to be acknowledged by society (Lauters, 2009). Females can still be stock characters today, but it is surprising that Turnipseed's wife is never more fully developed when she is present in so many of his articles. Her name is never mentioned in the columns from 1926, and the only child ever mentioned is Johnny. The fact that no daughter is mentioned is probably a conscious choice that reflects the 1920s mentality.

The nagging persona that is given to many of the women in Turnipseed's columns is one that comes from the husband's point-of-view which showcases the role that females often took as wives or mothers. The 1920s were the era where women could begin seeing themselves as an entity separate from their husbands and families with the

new freedoms and job opportunities that were made available during the decade (McDonnell, 2013). Because this was a concept that was just beginning to take form for many women, it was not commonplace. Those living in rural areas were particularly not as receptive to the changes that were more prominent in urban areas, so the fact that Turnipseed and his readers have not accepted the change is not surprising. In the January 7, 1922, edition of the *Indiana Prairie Farmer* one of the platforms that was supported by the publication was to "make life easier for mother" (Erb, 1991, p. 33). Although the publication does support making life easier for mothers, the role of the females is still viewed as the mother. In rural communities, females have not formed an identity outside of the home and family. During this time, the vast majority of people living in rural areas would still have had the mentality that women were wives and mothers before all else (Lauters, 2009). The more modern viewpoint would not yet have reached rural communities.

4.7 Critic's Discussion of Lives of Females Claim

The critic in 2015 lives in a society where the lives of females have greatly changed and progressed. In the 1920s, females lived a very different lifestyle and were viewed differently by society. Women were just beginning to gain more rights, and while some states had already granted women suffrage, all females obtained the right to vote with the federal legislation in 1920 (Klein, 2015). Additionally, women were also beginning to work outside the home. Primarily, these were such jobs as secretaries and stenographers. These were new freedoms that had previously not been granted to females. Flappers were also introducing females to a different, freer lifestyle with their new clothing and hair

choices as well as the way they chose to behave. These were very different options for females than what had ever been offered in the past (History.com staff, 2010).

Even with these options available, many women in rural areas still maintained only the roles of wife and mother. In 1928, the *Prairie Farmer* wanted to showcase the success of females, and they did this by creating the "Master Homemaker" award that was similar to the "Master Farmer" awards received by male readers of the time. The Master Homemaker award judged candidates "…on home management, family health, living habits, and social activities" (Erb, 1991, p. 33). While the *Prairie Farmer* is making an effort to recognize its female readers, they are doing it in a way that personifies the gender stereotypes that had dictated the lives of females into the 1920s.

Today females have a much greater sense of freedom. Women in today's society have grown-up accustomed to the freedom and rights that many women were just starting to embrace in 1926. Women fought for years to be granted the right to vote, and this struggle would have been fresh in the minds of many females. Today's society was not part of the struggle and most women living today have always had the right to vote. Many more women also work outside the household today in a wider array of jobs. Women are no longer primarily only secretaries and stenographers but are able to pursue a wide range of professional careers without it being questioned by society. An analysis of the twentieth century by Caplow, Hicks, and Wattenberg (2001) found that "at the beginning of the century, only about one of twenty physicians, one of a hundred lawyers, and one of a thousand engineers were females…By 1998, women constituted 29 percent of lawyers, 26 percent of physicians, and 11 percent of engineers" (p. 44).

While the right to vote and the numerous career options have significantly increased, there are still some areas where the lives of women from the 1920s era are relatable to today's society. There are men today who have misogynistic views of women, and there are gender roles that have remained intact. There are still concepts, careers, and ideas that people recognize as being predominantly female. Examples of this include the secretarial positions that are still viewed as a position for females, and the concept that women are the ones who cook and clean has not been completely erased from modern day. Additionally, in today's society, women struggle to be receive the same pay as males for performing the same job. According to the Council of Economic Advisors (2015) women form 47 percent of the labor force, yet in 2013 they still only made 78 cents for every dollar a man makes (p. 1).

For females, the differences between the 1920s and today is great. As a female critic living in 2015, it is easy to want to judge the rural culture of the 1920s for its demeaning portrayal of females. Critics today, however, must realize the differences between the 1920s and present day. Today's American culture has become accustomed to discussions of feminism and the blurring of gender roles. While the Turnipseed columns may appear to be unfair toward women, they are not necessarily intended to be extremely harsh towards women or to promote misogynistic views. The 1920s were a different era where women were just beginning to gain their own rights, and it was still very much a man's world. The fact that the Turnipseed columns have few females whose characters are not highly developed is not surprising for this era and should not be taken offensively. While this information does help to define the culture of the era, the critic in today's age

must remember to not take too much offense or too much of a feministic view toward the Turnipseed column.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

This research examines the text of the 1926 *Indiana Prairie Farmer* column, John Turnipseed, to gain insights into 1920s rural American culture while still putting into perspective the role of the critic. The literary theory of New Historicism is used to guide the analysis. The document also calls attention to the historical elements of the *Indiana Prairie Farmer* and Turnipseed column.

Agricultural publications were an important part of the lifestyle for rural Americans in the 1920s. They provided entertainment and information to rural communities who would not otherwise have access to such material. The *Indiana Prairie Farmer* is an example of a state farm publication that kept rural Indiana subscribers informed and entertained. John Turnipseed was one of the recurring columns that kept rural families entertained with the amusing and relatable character of Turnipseed, who told humorous stories of life on his farm. Turnipseed "was always a 'dirt' farmer as well as a philosopher" (Budd, 1991c, p. 120).

The three research objectives first identified in Chapter 1 encompass the purpose of this document. The objectives were as follows:

1. To describe the John Turnipseed content in the *Indiana Prairie Farmer* in terms of content, major themes, and style.

2. To use New Historicism as a literary criticism tool to analyze the John Turnipseed content in the context of its culture

3. To understand how the historical factors of education and the lives of females are reflected in the content of the John Turnipseed column.

This chapter summarizes findings and offers concluding remarks on key points made throughout the previous four chapters. In addition to restating and explaining the claims and objectives of the document, the chapter also offers conclusions not falling directly within the realm of the objectives or the theoretical framework of New Historicism. Although not a part of the central analysis, these remarks are based from the literature review and analysis and provide implications for future research. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the importance of this research.

5.2 Summary of Claims

Chapter 4 provides three claims about the two historical factors analyzed in this research: education and the lives of females. The first claim made about education is that for those living in 1920s rural America there was not a perceived need for education. In 1920s rural America, the educational attainment level was lower than it is today with the majority of the population having no more than an eighth grade education (Ryan & Siebens, 2012). Today, 91 percent of Americans between the ages of 25 and 29 have at least a high school diploma or its equivalent (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). Additionally, the majority came from agrarian backgrounds in which their ancestors were primarily farmers. Rural Americans living during the era valued common sense and did not necessarily see formal education as a

way of increasing common sense. The critic living in 2015 would likely find the idea of education being perceived as unneeded as a strange or outmoded concept. Education has progressed greatly in the U.S. over the last ninety years, increasingly being viewed as a necessity and a part of modern culture. Today, it is hard to imagine education being perceived as unneeded when countless careers are dependent upon one's educational attainment. Critics analyzing this text today should take care not to judge the era or individuals in the era using a present-day lens. This culture is different from the present day and had different needs, perceptions, and experiences.

Another claim made about education is that people in 1920s rural American generally viewed too much education as negative. The 1920s were a decade of change for the U.S., but those living in rural areas were more reluctant to embrace the change. Traditional ways of life had worked well up to that point, and many people saw no reason to change. Education is often a driving force for change. Many people living during this era might have feared education and the change it could promote. With this in mind, Turnipseed is seen by the modern-day critic as a character who frequently contradicts himself. He is often wary of education but is seen giving it a chance throughout the course of the column. Results are mixed with Turnipseed occasionally supporting the educational idea and at other times abandoning it. Turnipseed is a character caught in the changing world of the 1920s, and he is trying to reconcile the differences occurring in his life. One of the reasons that Turnipseed might be reluctant to fully embrace education is to maintain his rapport with other farmers, who are likely to be skeptical about education. In today's era, change has become constant. For example, technology changes quickly, and as a culture, we have become accustomed to this change. This technology brings new

information at a moment's notice. Present day society craves information, expects innovation, and has become accustomed to change, but for the culture of 1920s rural America, this orientation to change would have been a foreign concept.

In terms of the lives of females, the claim can be made that females were seen as stock characters with little character development. Turnipseed's wife is seen only in the role of a nagging female who makes her husband's life more difficult. There are few females in the column, and those who are present are predictable and stereotypical of a nagging wife. Today's critic needs to be aware of how far females have progressed in the last ninety years not only in the home and workplace, but also in how they are portrayed in media. With this in mind, the critic should not be overly judgmental of female portrayals in the Turnipseed column. The column is not meant to be mean or hostile toward females. The text is simply providing one representation of how females were perceived and treated in that era. People from the 1920s likely would not have questioned this dismissive portrayal of females as some might in today's culture.

5.3 Objectives

Objective 1

The background of the John Turnipseed column, as well as the history of the *Indiana Prairie Farmer*, was discussed including elements of content, major themes, and style. Turnipseed is a column whose content provides humorous commentary on rural life and agricultural issues of the time. In this document, the major themes of education and the lives of females were addressed, but the themes in Turnipseed's column range across a number of issues. The Turnipseed column's style is fictional and provides humorous

stories told in the colloquial dialect of the day. Important issues of rural life are discussed by the likable character of John Turnipseed.

Objective 2

The analysis of this document was carried out using New Historicism as a literary framework to analyze text from the Turnipseed columns. Using New Historicism allows text to be read as a reflection of its culture, and allowed me, as the critic, to reflect upon my own culture in the analysis. New Historicism was used to analyze the Turnipseed articles in the culture of 1920s rural America.

Objective 3

Using New Historicism, the historical factors of education and the lives of females were the primary topics analyzed. To understand how these factors were being reflected in the content of the Turnipseed columns, specific references to education and the lives of females were identified in the column. Once recognized, the factors were analyzed to determine how they reflect the culture of 1920s rural America.

5.4 Comments on Methodology

New Historicism is a literary theory that provides a lens for reading a text to learn more about the culture of the era. From the Purdue University Online Writing Lab, "New Historicism assumes that every work is a product of the historic moment that created it...New Historicists do not believe that we can look at history objectively, but rather that we interpret events as products of our time and culture" (Brizee, Tompkins, Chernouski, & Boyle, 2012, It's All Relative section, para. 3). One way to better understand this definition of New Historicism is to break it into two components. In the first component,

text is viewed as a reflection of the culture from which it was created. The critic can read the text to gain a better understanding of that era's culture. The second component required the critic to remember the influence of his or her own time and culture on the analysis. Since the critic is living in a different culture, he or she will have different experiences and influences that affect the analysis.

Using New Historicism in the current research presented a number of challenges due to the lack of detailed guidance the literature provides about this methodology. The freedom in the methodology means there is no standard or single accepted way to perform the analysis, so the process of learning the methodology was challenging at times. Also, because New Historicism is dependent on the critic's point in history, another critic may produce a different analysis of the same text. Measures of reliability, which are common in social science research, are not applicable to or appropriate for literary criticism.

Overall, this document is a literary criticism of a text. It is not a social-scientific endeavor. When critically analyzing a text, the critic is aware that interpretations are debatable and may vary from one individual to another. Unlike with social-scientific research, having a different interpretation of the analysis does not make it less valid. A literary analysis is valid as long as it avoids obvious conclusions, uses evidence from the text to support its main claims, and uses reasoning to relate the evidence to the claims (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Writing Center, n.d.).

An additional tenet of New Historicism is that all texts should be analyzed without consideration to hierarchy. No text receives preferential treatment or is considered better than another text. Fictional work can be studied at the same level as an

historic document. All texts may be analyzed using New Historicism (Cantor, 1993, p. 23), and there is no thought of a text being considered part of a low or high culture. Additionally, the role of the author does not hold as much power as that of the culture in the creation of the text. Hens-Piazza (2002) comments that "texts are caught up in the social processes and contexts out of which they emerge. Though identified with a single author, texts are generated by a community. This community produces a text while another community reads it and thus are its consumers" (p. 6). While a text always has an author, New Historicism is concerned not with how the text reflects the belief of the author, but rather how the text reflects the culture of the era.

5.5 Additional Conclusions

The following sections provide five additional conclusions that are outside the scope of the study objectives and the literary theory used to guide the study. However, they offer insights into the John Turnipseed column, its uniqueness, and how it might be interpreted in the current day.

5.5.1 Uniqueness of Turnipseed Column

The John Turnipseed column is a unique genre written in an interesting transitional period of American history. The column is an historical artifact that depicts the culture of 1920s rural America. The humor as well as the topics that were discussed provides a glimpse of what life was like for the rural American living in 1926.

Turnipseed's column was meant to be humorous, yet there were underlying messages and opinions prevalent in the column. Beyond the humorous surface of

Turnipseed, serious issues were addressed. In a rural America that was holding onto a conservative way of life, this was one way to introduce new topics and ideas. Additionally, publications have their own platform and guidelines for what they publish. A column such as John Turnipseed allows the author to take more liberties with what is said. A topic that could not be discussed in a serious, newsworthy article could be published in the Turnipseed column. Examples would be topics that go against or question what the general readership and publication believed in conservative 1920s America. The humor of the Turnipseed column helps to remove the threat of topics that would be unappealing to the readers or the publication.

Additionally, the Turnipseed column is unique because it provides a different view of culture than would news articles or advertisements. The style of the Turnipseed column with its humor and colloquial text reveals different aspects of the 1920s era. The news stories published in the *Prairie Farmer* indicate the major topics of that time, but Turnipseed is able to showcase a different side of that culture. The humor, style of writing, and topics discussed provide a glimpse into 1920s America that the more serious news stories might not reveal. The Turnipseed columns are no more or less effective than other content published in *Prairie Farmer* at revealing the culture of the 1920s era, but they do provide another perspective into that time period.

While the majority of this document focuses on the 1920s era, the Turnipseed column spanned nearly seven decades and across the lives of multiple authors. The Turnipseed character enjoyed open popularity during this period and was emulated by dedicated readers at various picnics and festivals in the Midwest and was heard on the WLS radio station in his own Friday night programing (“The History of WLS Radio,

n.d.). Tunripseed was more than just a magazine column for readers in 1920s rural America. He was a relatable character whose adventures and antics were welcomed into the home of thousands of rural families. His stories were a form of entertainment in an era before television and the Internet. The Turnipseed column would have been the closest form of entertainment to today's television sitcom. Budd (1991c) comments that "many *Prairie Farmer* subscribers would not consider themselves through with the latest issue until they had read John Turnipseed…" (p. 120). Not only were the Turnipseed columns entertaining, but they were something that the family eagerly anticipated from week to week and could share with their neighbors and other family members.

Turnipseed's popularity and longevity were due to his relatability with the readers. If Turnipseed's readers had been unable to connect with him as a character, he would not have reached such a high level of popularity. Turnipseed's relatability to his rural readers stems from his agricultural roots and life as a farmer. His ability to discuss issues pertinent to readers make the column an interesting read, but it is his blundering character that endeared him to the readership. Turnipseed has a way of putting himself in humorous situations and often laughing at his own antics. Readers were amused by Turnipseed's adventures and related to his easygoing character.

5.5.2 Turnipseed in Modern Day

Today, in the *Indiana Prairie Farmer*, there are no fictional columns being published. The closest example in present-day *Indiana Prairie Farmer* is "The Front Porch." While not a fictional piece, this column provides real-life anecdotes from Editor Tom Bechman. The *Indiana Prairie Farmer* focuses its attention today more on younger

commercial farmers because this is where advertisers want to focus. Younger commercial farmers would be more attentive to the progressive scientific articles than the folksy, humorous antics of Turnipseed. Today, Turnipseed's readership would be predominately the older generation (T. Bechman, personal communication, September 17, 2015). In the 1920s, the Turnipseed column was a form of entertainment for the entire family, but in the modern era entertainment is sought in mediums other than agricultural publications.

If Turnipseed were still being published in modern farm magazines, it would not be the same Turnipseed that entered the homes of readers in the 1920s. Not only would Turnipseed be faced with different issues and topics, but his style would also be different. Today, society is more aware of the portrayal of farmers. In order to avoid negative stereotypes of farmers being uneducated, Turnipseed's colloquial dialect would probably be lost as would some of his bumbling behaviors. With these changes, some of Turnipseed's humor would inevitably be lost. Barb Atsaves, manager of administration for Tribune Radio Networks, which has multiple agricultural productions believes that "farming is not treated anymore with the 'down-on-the-farm' attitude…It's a sophisticated business now" (Borzillo, 1993, Farm Reports are Dishing the Latest Dirt section, para. 4 & 5.) This change in mentality contrasts with the style of the Turnipseed column of the 1920s and provides an environment that is not conducive to columns like Turnipseed.

5.5.3 Beyond New Historicism

While New Historicism was an appropriate theoretical framework for the current research, some additional conclusions can be made beyond the scope of New Historicism.

For more than 200 years, agricultural publications have had a goal of informing the rural population. Today, agricultural publications focus primarily on agricultural subject matter, but in the 1920s agricultural publications covered a wider span of subjects. In the analysis, it became obvious with the frequency education was mentioned that it was a platform supported by Editor Clifford Gregory and the *Prairie Farmer*. One of Gregory's well-known topics was, in fact, improved education through school consolidation. Gregory supported this cause but was aware of the hardships it would cause rural families (Erb, 1991, p. 33). Although Gregory and his publication valued education, it is important to note that New Historicism focuses more on the moment in culture that created the text rather than solely the platform of the author. The chief value of New Historicism is not in drawing inferences about the motivation of the author, but in gaining insights into the era in which he or she was writing.

Additionally, it is important to recognize that the lives of females claim is based on text written by a man. This does not make the analysis less valuable, but it is an important component that falls beyond the scope of New Historicism. Caucasian males were members of the dominant culture of the time, so Gregory's perspective might differ from that of an author from a different gender or ethnicity. Gregory's views are important but are not central to a New Historicist analysis.

The satirical nature of the column creates an additional element for consideration. The Turnipseed columns were meant to be humorous. Turnipseed is a character who often has misadventures and never takes himself too seriously. The Turnipseed columns were intended to make readers laugh, yet important subjects such as education and current legislation were often discussed amidst Turnipseed's humor. The fact that

Gregory used humor to discuss serious matters suggests this may have been one of the best ways to introduce new ideas to farmers. Rather than writing a formal article about a serious topic like education that likely would have met resistance from the general readership, the Turnipseed columns introduce a new idea in a less confrontational way. The Turnipseed column introduces a concept that could eventually lead to a change in farmer beliefs.

The humor prevalent in the Turnipseed columns is a different type of humor than what is found in present day. Much of Turnipseed's humor is focused upon then-current events as well as the lifestyle of the 1920s. The events and lifestyles of the early twentieth century would not hold the same importance or level of humor to a modern-day audience. For example, Turnipseed often comments and satirizes government and legislation from the 1920s. Readers in Turnipseed's era would be more familiar with these issues and would better understand the humor than an audience in 2015. Ultimately, the humor displayed in the Turnipseed columns is a different type of humor for a bygone generation of people.

5.5.4 Relationship of Cultures

The analysis used in this document focuses on the subculture of rural American in the 1920s. Rural America in the 1920s is a subculture of the broader American culture of that era. For this analysis, it was necessary to focus upon the rural subculture because it was the primary readership for agricultural publications. In the 1920s, the rural subculture would have been much larger than it is today. Although the 1920s were the first era in which more people lived in cities than rural areas (History.com staff, 2010), the

proportion of those living in rural areas would have been greater than in present day. Even those who had moved away from the farm would not be as far removed generationally from the rural lifestyle as is the large majority of people today in the U.S.

Although the subculture analyzed in this document focused primarily on rural America, it was still important to discuss the overarching American culture in Chapter 2. Many of those living in rural areas may not have been directly impacted by major events in the 1920s, yet these events would still have influenced their lives in some way. For example, flappers were an aspect of the overall American culture of the 1920s. Women were gaining more freedom and were able to express themselves differently through their appearance and lifestyles. This was a change occurring in cities and particularly among younger women, but it is important to note that most women in rural areas did not embrace the flapper lifestyle. Regardless, Turnipseed mentions flappers in multiple columns in 1926. It is surprising that flappers would be mentioned in any capacity in an agricultural publication. While not a part of 1920s rural culture, flappers were a part of 1920s urban American culture that did exert at least an indirect influence on rural America. People in rural areas could still have thoughts and opinions about these new lifestyles. Discussing the general 1920s culture is an important component of the current research because an event or trend does not have to directly impact a subculture to influence it.

Turnipseed covers a wide array of subjects in his columns, but the decade of the 1920s had countless events that could have been mentioned in the Turnipseed columns. Commenting on every event and idea from the 1920s would have been impossible for the Turnipseed columns. While one might question why certain subjects were presented and

others were not, the analysis of the Turnipseed columns can focus only on what the text provides. In a literary analysis, the unit of the analysis is the text. If Turnipseed does not mention a topic, then no claims can be produced because there is no evidence to support them. One example of this is within the analysis of the lives of females. The text does not include references to African-American women or any minority-group females, so the analysis cannot be directly applied to these groups. Thus, the analysis of the Turnipseed columns can focus only on subjects and events mentioned within the text.

5.5.5 Lack of Change

Throughout the analysis, one of the major themes I noticed was how much life can change in the span of nearly nine decades. While this is to be expected, I also noticed that some aspects of life appear to never change. As a society in 2015, it is easy to perceive ourselves as far-removed from every feature of the 1920s, but through my research I noticed this is not always the case. A few of the examples that were the most obvious to me were associated with the older generations. In the January 16 column, Uncle Si talks about how much better life was years ago. Today, elder generations often still discuss how much better life was in the "olden days." Regardless of the time period, older generations tend to idealize the days of their youth. In the same Turnipseed column, Uncle Si discussed how the weather is not as extreme as it was when he was younger. Uncle Si recalls winters that were much colder and harsher ("Too Many Guessers"). This is another behavior that continues into modern day. The older generation today still often discusses the mildness of present day weather compared to the weather from the days of their youth.

Issues in agriculture have also remained seemingly unchanged. One topic in agriculture that continues to be prevalent is the farmer's need to receive more of the consumer's money. This is a topic that is as relevant today, if not more, as it was in the 1920s. The second goal in the platforms published in the January 7, 1922, edition of the *Prairie Farmer* stated the interest for "more of the consumer's dollar for farmers." (Erb, 1991, p. 33). Today, this battle continues as farmers fight to receive more money for the items they produce.

Certain elements of the historical factors of education and the lives of females have also experienced little change in the last ninety years. In terms of education, one of the platforms of major concern was the consolidation of schools (Erb, 1991, p. 32-33). Today, consolidation continues to be an issue with education as rural schools are closed, and children living in rural areas are sent farther away to school. In terms of the lives of females, the stereotypical nagging that husbands perceive their wives to have has continued throughout the generations. This is a mentality that has endured to the present day (Talbot, 2003).

While many social aspects have changed over the years, some have not. I entered this analysis purposefully looking for the changes in culture between the years 1926 and 2015, but I surprisingly discovered some consistencies that have endured for nearly ninety years.

5.6 Importance of Research

The purpose of this research was to showcase an important yet often overlooked element of rural life in the early twentieth century, which was agricultural publications.

While agricultural publications, such as *Indiana Prairie Farmer*, are still in print and popular today, their place in society has greatly changed. The agricultural magazine was once a primary source of knowledge and entertainment for the entire rural family at a time when few other media could provide such services. The John Turnipseed column is a text that represents that time period. The Turnipseed column is no longer published, and there is nothing in today's culture that can equate to what the Turnipseed stories contributed to 1920s rural America. The Turnipseed column is a lost art form and narrative from a bygone era. Literary criticism provides modern-day readers an opportunity to rediscover this genre and gain a deeper understanding of the influential role it may have played in the lives of rural Americans.

This document provides insights for students and scholars in the field of agricultural communication. The *Indiana Prairie Farmer*, as well as other agricultural publications, discussed in this document, is part of the history and present-day development of agricultural communication. Understanding the field's past and its historical roots can help agricultural communicators develop a more complete understanding of the discipline's present status and its future. Because New Historicism forces the reader to think critically about the text and his or her own interaction with it, the approach offers the potential to gain greater insights into the field and its literature.

With its basis in literary theory, New Historicism offers a novel method of analysis that could diversify future research in agricultural communication. Analyzing agricultural texts using a literary criticism tool is an alternative to social-scientific studies of agricultural communication. This document analyzes how the historical factors of education and lives of females are presented in a fictional column during one year of

coverage in a state farm magazine. Many other historical factors and texts could be analyzed for additional insights. For example, New Historicism could be used to examine how any number of topics – farm legislation, technology, rural life, environmental issues – have been addressed in literature and the variety of ways these topics can be interpreted by modern-day readers. A New Historicist analysis could encompass any genre of text from fiction to non-fiction and might include books, radio programs, television programs, or other media products. For example, students could study a fictional novel, a cartoon, or any other text from a given era to gain insight into historical topics. This document could be a catalyst for future research in agricultural communication as it creates a foundation for an entirely new area of analysis and discoveries for the field.

In addition to providing implications for future research, this analysis can also help inform and diversify undergraduate and graduate teaching in agricultural communication and other disciplines, such as agricultural and Extension education. Introducing students to New Historicism could provide an insightful way to analyze and critically process a variety of texts, including news stories, historical accounts and advertisements.

Of particular potential value is the conceptual lens offered through New Historicism that requires the reader/critic to consider his or her position in the modern day as they read a text. Because it requires students to consider their current point in history as they read a text, New Historicism may offer a way to make history more meaningful to current-day readers, some of whom struggle to understand its relevance.

The utility and value of the current research is not limited to agricultural fields. History showcases not only the major events of the past, but also demonstrates cultural

changes that have or have not occurred over the decades. According to the adage, one is destined to repeat history if he or she fails to learn it. Learning about one's past can help a society see how far it has come, and how much further it needs to go. History offers a learning experience for a society, and New Historicism specifically helps readers identify and understand the differences between today and yesterday.

The current research primarily analyzes the historical factors of education and the lives of females. Researchers whose scholarship addresses education or experiences of minority populations may discover useful insights into the cultural changes associated with these subjects. By understanding the past, present-day researchers and advocates for these factors gain a deeper understanding of how the subjects have been viewed by society over time. These insights can potentially help improve social conditions in the future. Ultimately, there are numerous groups who could benefit and use the research from this analysis to gain valuable insights, including those who conduct research or advocate for improved education, equality, and social justice.

5.7 Critic's Postscript

As with any large undertaking, writing this thesis was a challenge. There were numerous directions the analysis could have gone and the literature review could have become its own book. However, the research has to be made manageable and, at some point, decisions must be made to limit its scope. While New Historicism does not provide specific guidelines for the methodology or for ensuring validity of scholarship, I tried to constantly make well-informed decisions through every phrase of the research. As a scholarly endeavor, New Historicism is most closely aligned with the humanities

disciplines of English and literature. These fields have their own conventions for scholarly writing and manuscript organization. Nonetheless, I followed the thesis organization rules and format most commonly used in my home department. Literary criticism has rarely been applied to agricultural communication as a form of scholarship. I am passionate about the research I performed to create this document and hope it may pave the way for others to rediscover genres of the past as ways of better understanding our current field and audiences.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX

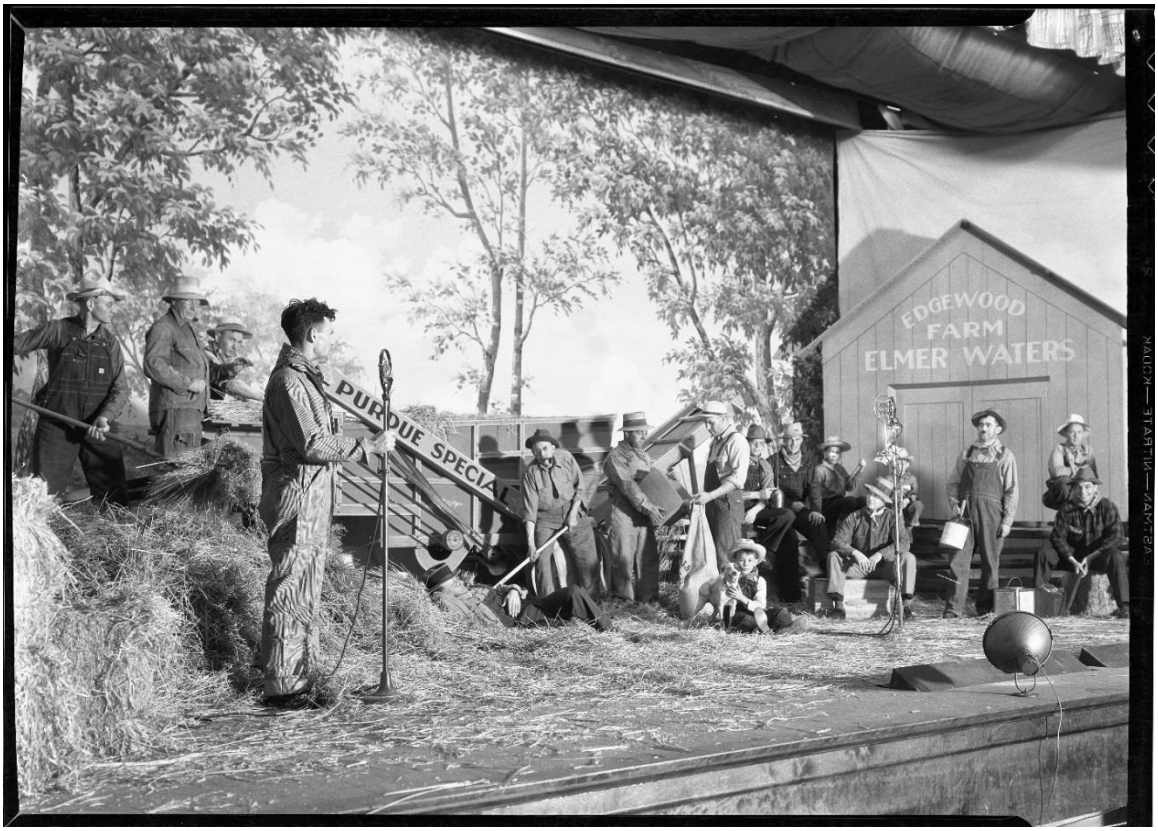
COURTESY OF THE INDIANA STATE LIBRARY. Farm equipment from the early part of the Twentieth Century. John Dicks from Lebanon, Indiana.

COURTESY OF THE INDIANA STATE LIBRARY. A photograph from the early Twentieth Century showing tobacco production.

COURTESY OF THE INDIANA STATE LIBRARY. Farm equipment from the early part of the Twentieth Century.

COURTESY OF THE INDIANA STATE LIBRARY. Farm equipment from the early part of the Twentieth Century.

[Purdue University Archives photograph collection, 1880-2010], Courtesy of Purdue University Libraries, Karnes Archives & Special Collections. Found under the folder, "Ag Experiment Station," this photo illustration had the following information on the reverse side: "Purdue Threshing Ring that conducted agriculture programs on WLS-Chicago, winter 1927. Left to right: President Elliott, Claude Harper, William Aitkenhead, Dean J.H. Skinner, Jay C. Gaylord, Sir G.L. Christie, Dr. F. L. Walkey, W. O. Mills, Harry J. Reed." The president of Purdue University as well as the Dean of Agriculture and a future Dean of Agriculture for Purdue are present in this photograph. The experiment stations provided a way for new innovations in agriculture to be witnessed by the public.



[J.C. Allen Purdue University negatives and photographs, 1915-1974], Courtesy of Purdue University Libraries, Karnes Archives & Special Collections. WLS Threshing Crew entertainment at the Agricultural Conference at Purdue University in June of 1933. During this time WLS owned the *Prairie Farmer*.

[Purdue University Archives photograph collection, 1880-2010], Courtesy of Purdue University Libraries, Karnes Archives & Special Collections. Purdue University auditorium class from the early Twentieth Century. Although the class appears to be predominately male, there are some females seated in the group.

[Purdue University Archives photograph collection, 1880-2010], Courtesy of Purdue University Libraries, Karnes Archives & Special Collections. Purdue University classroom from the early Twentieth Century.